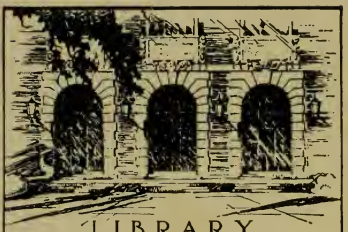
823
P21m
v.2



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
P21m
v.2

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

University of Illinois Library

NOV – 4 195

L161— O-1096

THE MARDENS,

AND

THE DAVENTRYS.

TALES,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TRAITS AND TRADITIONS OF PORTUGAL,"

&c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1835.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/mardensdaventrys02pard

823
P21m
V. 2

THE MARDENS.

CHAPTER I.

Up rose the sun, and a new day smiled upon the earth: the sky was blue and beautiful; the birds were busy among the boughs, the lake shimmered gaily in the flashing light, and a thousand perfumes came on the breeze from the far-stretching shrubberies of The Elms. But the loveliness of nature failed to impart its joyousness to the inmates of that proud dwelling; the master moved gloomily through his decorated apartments, and the

6

menials whispered their wonder and their dismay the one to the other, with blenched lips and darkened brows.

Death was beneath the roof of Daubigny! The stranger who, high in health and lofty of purpose, had but the previous evening sought the hospitality of The Elms, lay stretched a corpse on his gorgeous and velvet-curtained bed! His race was run: and he pressed his pillow with a smile so calm that it might have rested on the lips of an infant. One hand, on which glittered a costly jewel, supported his head; the other hung listlessly over the side of the couch, in all the apparent langour of deep sleep. There was not a shadow upon the high calm brow; it seemed that his last dream had been a happy one; and that his last breath had escaped without a sigh.

Those who first looked on him doubted that he was dead, and strove to awaken him; and by far the most earnest of these was Daubigny. When the servant who had received orders

to arouse the traveller at dawn, hurriedly informed his master of the fatal event of the night, that master merely scoffed at the tidings; and hastily drawing on his dressing-gown, proceeded to the chamber of his guest. Even then, with the clammy hand of the dead man in his own, and his face bowed down until it almost touched the cold brow of the corpse; even then did Daubigny refuse credence to his own senses:—it was only on the previous evening that his guest had been full of life—that he had eaten so heartily—that he had drunk so freely—that they had sat together long and late in social converse, and parted reluctantly as they found that they had worn far into the night. How then could this thing be? He looked round for a reply, but there were none who could answer the appeal; and with the aspect of one bewildered by so inexplicable a calamity, Daubigny slowly closed the door of the death-chamber, and returned to his own apartment.

Ere half an hour had elapsed, a mounted messenger was on his way to the town of ——, with a sealed packet from Mr. Daubigny to the coroner of the county; and long before the evening closed, the avenue leading to The Elms was crowded with horsemen, and foot-passengers, anxious, as the vulgar ever are, for the excitement of the horrible. Entrance was denied to none. Every facility was, on the contrary, offered by the master of the house to the gratification of public curiosity, and he repeatedly expressed his earnest hope that the person of the deceased might be identified. Often as the wish was uttered it was nevertheless ungratified; for, although scores of gaping and curious individuals stood long and wonderingly dividing their attention between the deceased, and the magnificent apartment in which he lay, not a circumstance, not a sentence, transpired which could offer the slightest clue to the identification of his person.

In the presence of many witnesses Daubigny had already searched the pockets of the dead man; but with the exception of some memoranda in a cypher perfectly unintelligible to the whole party, a few coins of inconsiderable value, and a locket plainly set in gold, and enclosing a tress of dark hair, they contained nothing to repay the searchers for their scrutiny.

An increased bustle in the court-yard announced the arrival of the coroner, and the individuals composing the inquest. Daubigny met them in the hall.

"You are come on a melancholy mission, Mr. Jefferson;" he said, striving to heighten the courtesy of his reception by a smile; "happy as I must ever be to see you under my roof, I would that it had been on a more pleasant errand."

"Very sad indeed, as you justly remark, Mr. Daubigny; very sad indeed, sir," replied the coroner with a lugubrious shake of the

head, as he deposited his hat and gloves on a table; "so awfully sudden, too! so terrible for the poor gentleman, (for I understand, be he whom he may, that there is no doubt of his being a gentleman, Mr. Daubigny!) and so vastly inconvenient for you."

"The last consideration is an unimportant one," said Daubigny; "death is always an awful visitation, but it were worse than selfish to think of my own temporary discomfort in such a case as this."

"Your sentiments do you honour, Mr. Daubigny; a vast deal of honour indeed, sir—and now to business, if you please."

The inquest was holden, but it elicited nothing new, it produced no single proof either of the identity of the dead man, or of the cause of his decease; and after a patient investigation, in the course of which every domestic in the establishment underwent a rigid examination, a verdict was returned of "Died by the visitation of God."

"Never was a case more clear, Mr. Daubigny; never more clear indeed, sir," said the coroner, as he took his seat at the well-furnished table at which he was invited to refresh himself after his exertions. "A fine man, a very fine man, Mr. Daubigny—a strikingly fine man indeed, sir—not at all a subject for sudden death, I should have thought; but we are all liable to error—a little of that potted char if you please—thank you—your Burgundy is superb, Mr. Daubigny — superb indeed, sir—thank you—my glass is not yet empty—his personals will bury him, I am glad to see—that ring!—very fine brilliant, Mr. Daubigny, very fine stone indeed, sir—strikingly fine diamond—strangely at variance with the scantiness of his purse—don't you agree with me, Mr. Daubigny?—Bread, if you please—his horse too is a noble animal, a noble animal indeed, sir; worth ninety or a hundred guineas if he is worth a crown; he must be sold, of course—Just returned from abroad, I think you said

that he informed you, Mr. Daubigny? poor gentleman! he did not survive his arrival at home long, for I presume that he was an Englishman—there is an English look about him, thoroughly English—not any more, I am obliged to you, except, indeed, it be another glass of your magnificent Bordeaux — you travelled gentry are fine judges of wine, Mr. Daubigny; very fine judges indeed, sir—I have not partaken of such a bottle of wine for some time. I would advise you to get this poor man buried as soon as decency will permit—say the day after to-morrow—a corpse is an uncomfortable inmate every where; but where there are ladies ——," and here the worthy coroner, who had just left the chamber of sudden and mysterious death, drew the corners of his eyelids together with a look of very facetious intelligibility, and glanced smilingly at his host; "where there are ladies, I say, it is doubly disagreeable, Mr. Daubigny; doubly disagreeable indeed, sir."

And thus ended the inquest: the stranger was decently buried, the horse and ring were sold, and the proceeds therefrom paid into the treasury of the County Hospital, greatly to the edification of the committee of that very praiseworthy charity; and save that the voice of wonder and speculation was yet busy, all was over.

A week had gone by since the funeral of the stranger, when a neighbour raised the latch of the Ivy Lodge, and greeted its melancholy mistress with the welcome sound of a familiar voice.

"Good day to you, mistress Susan, and how is your boy? and how are you yourself? and what think you of this awful adventure at The Elms? Poor gentleman! he little expected that his last hour was so nigh, I'm thinking, when he was carousing so merrily with the squire and madam—for you may be sure that the foreigner was in the thick of the feast—Lord help us! what poor mortals we are, sure enough—here to-day, and gone to-morrow. And to think of his spending his last night in

such sad company, poor soul; for, to be sure, she can be no wife of the Squire's, that outlandish woman; bad as he is, he never could have the heart to marry a foreigner."

"What has happened, Rebecca?" asked Susan earnestly; "what dark deed has been done now at The Elms?"

"Dark deed!" echoed her visitor, "who talked of dark deeds? man's hand had nothing to do here—the finger of God was in it."

"Ha!" said Susan more composedly, "what light associate of the Squire has been cut off in his sins?"

"Mercy on us! how's this?" exclaimed the gossip; "have you never heard of the poor gentleman who late one evening rode up to Squire Daubigny's door, and refused to allow tall John to carry his name to his master? Well, so it was, Susan; and in he went, and John who carried in lights, said that the Squire didn't know him any more than the child unborn, and he thought wasn't inclined

to be over civil to him at first; however, he soon came to, and then they had their supper as sociably as though they had known each other for twenty years; and at last the Squire rang the bell, and ordered a bed to be got ready for the stranger; and to bed he went sure enough, but he ——."

"Never left it again alive," broke in Susan with livid lips, and dilated eyes; "I knew it—I knew it—I warned him, but he smiled at my warning—and now all is over—and he is a murdered man!" And she flung herself into a chair, and wrung her hands in agony.

"Why, Heaven preserve us! what is the meaning of this?" asked Rebecca, terrified at the effect of her tidings; "and what are you saying about murder, Susan Ashton?"

"The meaning is —," replied Susan in a low and solemn tone, as she turned her blood-shot and tearless eyes upon her questioner; "that the dead man was Mr. Howard — he, whom my lady loved—he was with me here, in

this very room—and when he told me that he was going to The Elms, I tried almost upon my knees to prevent his doing so—Rebecca, he is murdered; I care not though they hang me for my words; again I say, he has been murdered—he, the best, the kindest —," and once more grief stopped her utterance.

"Mr. Howard!" echoed her companion; "are you sure of this? Oh, Susan, had you only been at the inquest to 'dentify the poor gentleman; no one knew him, not even the Squire himself, and so —"

"Peace, Rebecca;" said Susan with stern impatience; "I tell you Reginald Daubigny knew too well who was his guest—no man dabbles his hands in blood for pastime."

"Susan, Susan, you might be hanged for half this."

But Susan was firm, and, bidding her neighbour good morning with more haste than courtesy, she took her boy by the hand, and without waiting for cloak or bonnet, left the

cottage, and crossing the low style reached the high road, and turned in the direction of the county town.

"God help thee, my poor child!" were the first words she uttered, as she walked forward in feverish haste; "thou hast lost a kind friend, Jemmy; kinder never had mortal than Mr. Howard! It is well that there is another world ——"

"What of that, mother?" asked the idiot, replying rather to the sound of her remark than to its sense; "is not this a merry world where we are now, with a sun in the sky, and birds among the branches, and green grass in the meadows, and gay flowers in the cottage gardens? are they blither and bonnier in the other world yonder? And is father among them? If he be, he is better there."

"Poor boy!" sighed the heart-stricken parent; "I am thinking of the world where the angels dwell for ever and ever, and where no tears are shed."

But ere Susan could reply, the idiot boy was busied in chasing a butterfly, and heedless alike of his own enquiry and of the pang which it had caused. In a few moments he returned to her side, the bright insect had escaped, and while engaged in its pursuit another glimmering of his mother's meaning had flashed on his benighted brain.

"I know him! I know him!" he shouted joyously; "the kind stranger whose hand was on my head, and who smiled as father sometimes smiles in my dreams—he said he would come back, and we were to wander together far, far away among the tall grass and the wild flowers, with the long branches between us and the sun, and the laughing brook where I dip for pebbles, shining beside our path, and making a looking-glass for the blue sk y where is he now, mother?"

"He is dead, my poor boy, he will never come again!"

The idiot looked earnestly at her; to him

the idea of death was vague and undefined; but he saw that his mother wept, and he understood that the kind stranger would return no more; and stunned alike by the intelligence, and by the accent of sadness in which it was conveyed, the bitterness of the shock overcame him, and he sat down on the green bank by the way-side, and gazed vacantly and piteously around him.

"The singing birds leave the woods when the winter comes," he said at length slowly and plaintively; "but the spring sun and the spring blossoms bring them back again — the flowers hang their heads when the snow falls white and cold upon the earth, but they blow afresh gaily when the summer grows warm about them—the merry brooks are cold and drear under the ice of winter, but they run briskly again when the frost is gone, and sing their song to the green banks as gladly as ever —mother, the kind stranger will come back."

"Jemmy," said Susan with sudden earn-

estness, "listen to me;" and the boy turned towards her as she seated herself beside him, and took his hand in her's; "Listen to me, my son;" and she spoke slowly and gravely, and paused between each sentence to guess as nearly as she might if the poor bereaved boy caught the meaning of her words; "You remember that on the evening when the stranger left us, you wandered to The Elms, and that the night was spent, and the morning beginning to dawn when I found you crouched under a holly bush not a hundred yards from the house."

"And you chid me:"—interrupted the boy shrinking from beside her.

"That is over, Jemmy; I am not angry now," said Susan hastily, anxious to dispel his fear ere it clouded the memory which seemed suddenly so clear; "what did you see, my man, while you were in your hiding-place?"

The boy only answered by the self-gratulatory laugh of idiotism.

"Did the stranger come out to talk with

you?" asked his mother coaxingly, as she passed her fingers through his matted ringlets, and smiled encouragingly on him.

"Did he come out!" echoed the boy contemptuously; "why should he! I was there alone without bit or drop, and he was feasting may be—I was shivering in the cold moonlight, and he was merry among the silver lamps that glittered so gaily through the high windows—mother, they were late astir that night at The Elms."

"But did you see him, my boy?" asked the agitated woman.

There was a tremulousness in her voice which startled even the weak-witted being at her side; and he paused a moment ere he answered with a chuckling laugh: "Aye, aye, I saw them both—the proud Squire and the kind stranger—and he looked the grandest and the fiercest, mother; and he had yon shining thing in his hand that I saw a while before in yours —and then—and then—a cloud came over the

moon, mother," pursued the idiot, whose unusual stretch of intellect had suddenly failed him; "and I hunted for glow worms, but they were not abroad that night, and so I stole back again to the holly-bush, and fell asleep."

"And then I came and led you home!" said Susan cautiously, and in a tone of enquiry.

"Not till my dream was done!—not till my dream was done!" laughed the boy, clapping his hands; "I saw him to bed before me—alone, alone—for the squire and the lady sat long and late after he was gone; long and late, mother; talking, and drinking the red wine, as though it had been broad day, and the sun in the blue sky—and then they went too—and they stood side by side at the window—that one near the tall tree, and—and—Mother, let us go on."

And fatigued by so extraordinary a continuity of ideas, the idiot relapsed into his accustomed silence and imbecility, nor could all the

efforts of his mother draw from him another sentence on the subject nearest her heart.

Susan did not, however, waver in her resolution, but rising from the bank at the impatient bidding of the boy, she once more took him by the hand, and continued her way. The distance, great as it was, did not deter her; and unconscious in her present excited state of all sense of fatigue, she only breathed a mental thanksgiving that the vagrant habits of her child preserved him also from its influence. The sun had been at its meridian when she left her cottage, the west was one sheet of molten gold ere she reached the place of her destination; and even amid her misery, she frequently started at the visionary comments of her idiot son, who conversed in his own rambling and reckless manner with the vapoury clouds and the sighing trees, and the running brooks; and, who appeared to find, in this familiar communion with the beautiful in nature, an ample solace for his mental privation.

There is generally a poetry in madness, where the sufferer is not a puling or a palsied victim; even in the frantic flights of the violent there are outbreakings of a strange and startling sublimity; but in its calmer and more chastened form how often does madness present to us images of a beauty so vivid and intense as to seem like reflections of the light of a lovelier world, pillowed upon the gloom of this! Or gleams of a sweet sadness, so soft and shadowy that it can only find its response in the voiceless communion of the earth, the sky, and the waters.

Thus was it with the son of Susan, he associated every impulse, every affection, and every joy, with some bright natural object; he told his hopes to the blossoms, and scattered his passing sorrows to the winds: the breeze among the branches sighed him to rest, and the joyous carol of the birds awoke him from his slumbers. He made himself society where others would have been solitary, and found food for

pleasure, where many would have declared it "all barren." His was that happy idiotcy which was loving and gentle to all around, that perpetual infancy of heart and intellect which, guileless and unsuspecting, knew nothing of the world in which he lived, save that it was beautiful; nor of himself, but that he breathed the sweet air, and lingered among the blossoms unrebuked. Thus were the wanderings of his fancy like those of a young and happy child; and as he now walked beside his mother, often did he laugh out his heart's joy, as the gorgeous clouds congregated about the western hills, and formed fantastic images which his eager eye clothed with a vividity and distinctness palpable only to himself. Susan meanwhile hastily trod the narrow path-way into which they had diverged from the high road, and her heart beat fast and painfully as she approached the house of Mr. Compton, the zealous and accessible magistrate of ——.

"You have chosen your time badly, my

good woman;" said a servant whom she encountered at the door; "my master has friends in the house, and the dinner-bell will ring in five minutes. You had better call again in the morning."

"I cannot — I cannot" — gasped out the trembling Susan; "I must say it now—it is a tale of murder—"

"Lord save us!" exclaimed the man; "murder in this neighbourhood! why, we hav'nt—"

"What is the matter, Geoffry?" asked Mr. Compton, who entered the hall at that moment through a side door, accompanied by a friend; "what does the young woman require?"

The man approached him, and in a low voice communicated his intelligence.

"Indeed! I am sincerely sorry to hear it—when? where? but come in, come in, my good woman—Bransdon," he added, turning to his companion who stood a few paces apart: "will

you excuse me for five minutes—I trust that I shall not be long detained."

"Pray make no hurry on my account;" was the reply; and the blood fled from the lips and brow of Susan as she recognised the voice of Sir Willoughby Bransdon—the husband of Miss Daubigny—of the sister of the man whom she had come beneath that roof to denounce as a murderer! As the Baronet spoke, he left the hall, or he could not have failed to recognise the attendant of one whom he had loved as a sister.

"Show the woman into the library, Geoffry, and send Mr. Jackson there also; close the door which leads into the breakfast room, and on no account suffer me to be disturbed until I ring." And, so saying, Mr. Compton disappeared.

His orders were punctually obeyed, and in five minutes more, Susan holding her boy by the hand, found herself in the library, closeted with Mr. Compton, and a young man who was

seated at a table with writing materials before him.

"I think, my good woman;" commenced the magistrate mildly; "that you stated yourself to have come hither in order to charge some individual with murder—this is a very awful accusation, and one which must not be lightly ventured, either for your own sake, or for that of the suspected person—what is your name?"

"Susan Ashton, sir."

"Ashton—Ashton—the name seems familiar to me;" said Mr. Compton; "know you any thing, Jackson, of the name of Ashton?"

"A poacher of that name was transported some years back, sir, if you remember—he was one of a gang concerned in the murder of a game-keeper of Mr. Daubigny of The Elms."

"Oh! true, true—are you related to that man, young woman?"

"I am his unhappy wife, sir;" replied Susan bursting into tears, and trembling vio-

lently; for the conviction instantly forced itself upon her, how much her unfortunate connection with a convicted poacher, and a suspected murderer would tend to invalidate the truth and probability of her present testimony. "And this poor child, born in the very agony of our parting, this idiot-boy, is his son."

Mr. Compton was not insensible to the appeal, nor to the accent of unaffected anguish in which it was made: but the cloud which had gathered on his brow when he learned the relationship of Susan to the poacher Ashton, was, nevertheless, not dispelled. There is no crime on which country gentlemen look with more unconquerable severity than on poaching.

"And now to business, Mrs. Ashton:" he resumed more sternly, for the very utterance of the name had produced its effect: "does this presumed murder, (for I imagine it to be mere presumption of murder) does it arise, I ask, out of any quarrel between the members of the gang, of whose continued existence, I, as a

sufferer, have sufficient proof? If so, were I not a magistrate, I should be tempted to say that the worthy individuals who compose it are only forstalling public justice, and dealing out retribution upon each other."

"It has no connexion whatever with the misguided associates of my unfortunate husband, sir;" said Susan, aroused into composure by the somewhat ill-timed tirade of the ordinarily urbane magistrate. "Would that it bore only upon men whose lawless lives and broken fortunes had already prepared the few who still clung to them to be prepared for this added disgrace; in such a case, painful as it might still be, my task would yet be a lighter one. Forget, sir, I pray you, all other cause of displeasure, and listen to my tale with as little prejudice as may now be possible to you; for, believe me, it is no common one."

"Nor are you a common person, I should suspect, from your speech;" remarked Mr. Compton: "and yet your dress is not only that

of homeliness, but of absolute poverty—you are altogether a mystery; both your mission and your manner seem ill-suited to your circumstances."

"It may be that they are, sir; but I delay my tidings, and my heart will be lightened of a weary load when the tale is told."

"I have purposely detained you from the narration:" said Mr. Compton: "in order that I might form my own estimate of the credit which it would be advisable to concede to your statements; and at the same time to allow you to overcome your agitation:—Now speak—but let me advise you to be extremely cautious how you commit yourself—the more especially as you have hinted at the respectability of the individual accused; and how you suffer any private pique or jealousy to delude you into an injustice sinful before God, and hateful in the eyes of men:—thus far I have considered it my duty to warn you—and now, should you still feel your-

self at liberty to speak, I am on my side bound to listen."

"I am grateful, sir, for the warning, although in this case it was needless;" replied Susan, firmly: "I have come here to do my duty, and I trust that strength will be given me to go through with it, even though the task is a heavy one."

Mr. Compton slightly bent his head to intimate that he was prepared for the communication; and the young man, of whom mention has already been made, drew his writing-case nearer to him, and dipped his pen into the ink, as he looked towards Susan to catch the import of her opening address.

"You must well remember, sir," she resumed; "the early death of Mrs. Daubigny of The Elms; nor are you, I dare say, ignorant of the general rumour that she died of a broken heart—the rumour was a correct one—and never lost servant a kinder mistress than I did when I followed my sainted lady to the

grave—I had been her foster-sister—her playmate in infancy, and her pupil in girlhood, and it was the pride of my youth to be her attendant in after years—you will think me tedious, sir, but it is necessary to my story."

"By no means, by no means;" interposed Mr. Compton encouragingly; "and it now strikes me that I remember you—but proceed, my good young woman; and take your time."

Susan curtsied her thanks, and resumed. "I have acknowledged that my lady *did* die of a broken heart, sir, and I must now inform you of the cause. Mr. Daubigny had long wished to marry her, and the poor old gentleman her father, was strongly set upon the match, but my dear young lady would not listen to it, for her heart was elsewhere—It is of no use to keep the secret longer, sir, for you must know it at last, though my heart shrinks as I talk of that which her lips never uttered until the death-agony was on her.—

She loved Mr. Howard, sir, the curate of Marden; but he was too poor to ask her of her father, and so they lived on for a time, trying to be satisfied with seeing each other, and acting, as they both believed, according to their duty. But Mr. Daubigny soon discovered their secret, and he resolved to make one effort more before he resigned Miss Mary to his rival. He saw her one day alone, sir, for the old squire left them together, little dreaming of the misery which that fatal interview was to produce; and before he left the house, Mr. Daubigny had succeeded but too well—my lady was deaf to all his protestations, and he soon found that fine words could not win a heart like hers; so, in this dilemma, he had recourse to deceit; and he told her an artful tale of the involvements of her father which made her shudder; and when, in an agony of anxiety, she enquired how the old squire might be saved from the certain ruin which awaited him, Mr. Daubigny offered to rescue and pro-

tect him, provided she would then and there promise to become his wife. She did promise, sir; and her promise was redeemed, but she soon discovered that the tale was a false one, and she never looked up again, poor lady!

"To what can this melancholy story tend?" asked Mr. Compton."

"I will tell you as briefly as possible, sir—Mr. Howard, just at the time of my lady's engagement, came into possession of a large property, and suddenly left Marden; nor did any communication from himself, nor any intelligence from others, reach the Park, by which the family could ascertain what had become of him; although the old squire, even upon his death-bed, made repeated enquiries.

"After my lady's death, you may remember, sir, that Mr. Daubigny also left the neighbourhood, and that he continued absent for many years. I need not remind you that on his return he was shunned by all those who

had known him in my dear mistress's life-time; but he cared little for their coldness. The Elms became a scene of revel and dissipation, and there were new faces looking from the casements, and new voices sounding in the halls; but this loud joy did not find an echo in the heart of Mr. Daubigny; it soon transpired that he was a ruined man—on this fact, however, I need not dwell; although I feel bound to allude to the many mysterious rumours which were afloat both respecting himself and the foreign person who supplied the place of my dead mistress. And now, sir, I approach the conclusion of my tale—I myself heard Mr. Daubigny, on his last meeting with the young curate, vow that should they ever meet again, they would not part as the presence of my dear lady then compelled them to do; my mistress was not conscious at the time that I had overheard the threat, but she knew it before she died, and was only too well aware

that, should the occasion offer, the menace would be no idle one."

"Surely," interposed Mr. Compton, with a look of extreme anxiety; "you are not about to accuse——"

"Suffer me to proceed, sir;" said Susan, respectfully; "I may not have strength an hour hence. Ten days ago, on returning to my cottage from an errand to the village, I found a stranger seated beside my poor boy; and after I had conversed with him for a few minutes, totally ignorant of his name, though I at once discovered that he was far above me in rank, he told me that he was Mr. Howard! You may judge of my surprise, sir; and of the melancholy discourse which followed. I seemed to live again through all my sorrows; and he, poor gentleman, wept like a child: at length, he rose—he had spoken kindly (he was ever the best and kindest gentleman on earth!) to my poor boy here and the child clung to him, while he made me

many promises of protection, and before he left me, he gave me this purse—" and here, Susan drew from her bosom that which had been left with her by Howard; " and told me that he would be with me again soon, but that he had a holy errand to perform.

" Oh, sir!" she continued, wringing her hands; that errand, holy as it was, cost him his life."

" Great God!" exclaimed Mr. Compton, much excited; " what mean you?"

" In one of his periods of privation," pursued Susan; " Mr. Daubigny had disposed of the diamond necklace, which you, sir, as a friend of the family, must be well aware was an heir-loom in the house of Marden; by some strange fatality, Mr. Howard had met with, and recognized, this jewel; and knowing how much and how devotedly my lady had cherished it, he purchased it that it might not fall into more unworthy hands.

" When he learnt that my mistress had

left a daughter, his resolution was at once taken to restore the precious jewel to its legitimate owner; and he told me this:—in vain I dissuaded him from going to The Elms—in vain I represented that the child was not there—he was stedfast to his purpose. He said that he could not carry the jewel to my lady Bransdon, and thus acquaint her with a new delinquency of her brother, of which she might remain in ignorance; nor did he consider it fitting that the young lady should receive it from other hands than those of her father—and with this feeling, sir, he left my cottage for The Elms—and he has never returned."

"Then it is fair to infer, my good Mrs. Ashton, that he never reached The Elms," said Mr. Compton hastily.

Susan shook her head; "My boy followed him there, sir; for his kindness had won upon the heart of the poor child, and he saw him in conversation with Mr. Daubigny."

"Are you quite sure of this, my fine lad?"

asked the magistrate, looking keenly at the boy.

"Do I see the sun when he rides high at noon, or the moon when she is bright at midnight?" retorted the boy, with the composure and readiness of perfect sanity; "was he not kind to me? and when we thirst do we not look for a running water?"

"Proceed"—said Mr. Compton, turning towards Susan.

"I have little more to tell, sir;" she replied, feeling now that the effort was made, on how slight a foundation her accusation must appear in other eyes to have been built up, even satisfied as she was herself of its correctness; "but I would take the liberty of enquiring from you what property was found upon the person of the dead man!"

"So little, Mrs. Ashton," said the magistrate; "that it at once negatives your charge, by proving that Mr. Howard and the stranger must have been two distinct individuals—and now it is my duty—"

"You are about to rebuke me for the crime of false witness, Mr. Compton," interposed Susan undauntedly; "but the rebuke is premature—before God and you, I again accuse Reginald Daubigny of murder, and if he prove innocent of the crime, be it upon my own head, and that of the child whose hand I hold in mine! Sir, Sir, the curse has been long in coming, but it has fallen at last—I demand to see the clothes of the deceased; they may have been disposed of, but at the bidding of those in power they must be forthcoming—let me describe the person of Mr. Howard; there are many of the servants at The Elms who must have seen him—put me to any test you please—but until you are convinced that I am unworthy of credit, that I am mad, or urged on by some base impulse, do not disregard my assertion."

"Describe the person and clothes of the deceased, Mrs. Ashton," said the magistrate; "I saw both."

Susan readily obeyed.

"She is in this at least correct, I think, Mr. Jackson."

" Perfectly so, sir; but so many persons had access to the death-chamber — Mr. Daubigny so studiously courted publicity throughout the whole melancholy affair—that I should presume to suggest the utter inefficacy of this simple fact, to prove her position."

Mr. Compton stood for a moment in deep thought, and then, with a sudden start, he turned to Susan, and said gravely: " You are perhaps not aware that the husband of Mr. Daubigny's sister is at this moment beneath my roof."

" Yes, sir, I know it well—Sir Willoughby Bransdon left the hall at your request—I both saw and heard him."

" I am tempted to beg his presence," resumed the magistrate looking fixedly at her; " and to ask of him what portion of credit may safely be attached to any testimony of yours."

" I am indebted to you for the suggestion," was the reply: " I am certain of justice at the hands of one whom my lady loved so well."

"The case is of so serious a complexion;" pursued Mr. Compton; "and again—really I am so thoroughly bewildered by this unlooked for accusation, that it is a question I should not have neglected to ask in the very outset of the business—even assuming, (which, however I am by no means prepared to do;) but even assuming, I say, that the deceased stranger and Mr. Howard should, through your means, be proved to be one and the same person, how would so simple a fact either justify or lead you to infer, that a death which, by an inquest holden on the body, was declared, however sudden and deplorable, to be nevertheless natural and independent of human agency, was produced by violence? I am afraid that you have yielded to a strange and very unpardonable impulse, rather than acted on mature and rational reflection—you have placed yourself in a very perilous position, Mrs. Ashton, and I am much afraid that unless you have better reasons for your conduct than you have thought pro-

per to confide to me, you will rue this act as long as you live."

"Never, sir!" said Susan energetically: "if I have proved, or can prove, that the person declared to have died suddenly was Mr. Howard, where, I ask in my turn, is all the property, which to my own knowledge, he had about him when he left my cottage for The Elms? Does not this look strange, sir? Was it quite unworthy of remark that a gentleman, for such is the stranger declared to have been even by Mr. Daubigny—a person entitled by his position in society to sit at his table, and to share in his hospitality—that he should prove to be almost penniless, although possibly far from home—that he should have about him neither card nor letter by which he might be identified—and yet, that he should ride an animal whose value is still the talk of the neighbourhood, and wear a jewel upon his finger like the one I have just described?"

"Singular as these facts may be, they are

still very possible;" said the magistrate somewhat less decisively than he had just spoken: "however, without hinting at your business, I will request the presence of the Baronet." And he rang the bell.

Sir Willoughby shortly obeyed the summons, and the first individual on whom his eye rested as he entered, was Susan.

"Ha! Susan—" he exclaimed kindly; "I have not seen you for an age—not any thing has gone wrong with you, I hope; or why did you not apply to me, or to Lady Bransdon? and how are you, Jemmy?" he continued, shaking hands with the wondering boy; "why you are growing quite a man.—But I beg pardon, Compton; the sight of an old friend has made me forget that you wished to see me."

"The purpose for which I did so, Sir Willoughby, is already answered. I regret to say that this young woman has come before me to lay a very weighty charge against—against a respectable individual—in short, it is a matter

of life and death—and I was anxious to ascertain how far I should be justified in entertaining her testimony—do not speak hastily, Bransdon;" continued Mr. Compton; "for I am bound, before you reply, to inform you that you will feel most deeply when you learn the particulars of the case."

"That cannot operate in any way to silence me;" replied the Baronet gravely: "Susan Ashton was too old and too valued a servant of one who was most dear to me and to my family, for me to suffer myself to palter with her good name and character—indeed, so high an opinion have I of her sense of truth and moral rectitude, that did she accuse my own brother, I should give her credence."

Mr. Compton started, and exchanged looks with his secretary. "This is really extremely uncomfortable;" he said at length; "I positively do not know how to act—I never anticipated being placed in such a position—Mr. Jackson, be good enough to conduct Mrs.

Ashton and her son to my private room; she may, perhaps, with your good advice, see the expediency of withdrawing her accusation," and discover that she is in error—she is fatigued and excited: will you be good enough to ascertain that she is supplied with some refreshment? you will, I know, have the kindness to procure it yourself—you understand me?"

Mr. Jackson bowed, and rose from his seat.

Susan looked from Mr. Compton to the Baronet: "I am obliged, sir," she said "for your kindness; but I am more wearied in mind than body—nothing but a consciousness that it is a duty which I owe to the dead, could induce me to act as I am now doing. Do not fear that I shall confide my secret to your servants—when it is known to the world, there are some whom I would lay down my life, for the sake of my angel mistress, to save from sorrow, who will weep bitter tears over their disgrace—yet even they will not suffer as I shall, for every tear which I shed will be one of blood; but never-

theless, I will not shrink from the task which circumstances have imposed upon me; and you must pardon me, sir, if I forewarn you, that even should you seek to discountenance my assertion, or to treat my accusation with contempt, never will I cease from urging my claim to be heard, until the country shall ring with the cry for justice."

"That is a strange woman;" said Mr. Compton, as Susan followed the secretary from the room; "there is an energy and a determination about her, most unusual to her class—I wish that I had never seen her on such a mission."

"Is it a secret, may I ask?" demanded the Baronet.

Mr. Compton did not immediately reply; and then, looking steadily at his companion, he said slowly: "I begin to feel that I have not acted generously, perhaps I may even say, fairly by you, Sir Willoughby—I have been really so thoroughly taken by surprize on this occasion, that my only hope was that I should be enabled

to throw such suspicion on Mrs. Ashton's character, as might tend to cripple any credit which the world would otherwise have been disposed to grant to her statement; I am conscious that I have even exceeded my privilege in the line of conduct which I have pursued towards her; being so well aware, as I naturally am, that as a magistrate I was bound to receive her testimony at once, and to leave to a more solemn and adequate tribunal a decision on the case; but this is an alleged murder—you look surprized; it is indeed long, very long, since such a crime has been committed in our quiet county; nor is this the worst feature of the case—the accused is a gentleman of family and fortune—well known both to yourself and me—connected with one of us—"

The Baronet started: "And is Susan Ashton his accuser?"

"She is."

"Is the tale plausible?—is it conclusive?"

"To the first question I answer, yes—to the

second, by no means : it is built up on circumstances strikingly strung together—I fear that the malice is proved, even to the utterance of threats by the accused of the deed which is now alleged to have been committed;—but I am happily sceptical as to the commission of the crime; and fully persuaded in my own mind, that the deceased met his death as the inquest declared, by the visitation of God."

Mr. Compton looked hard at his companion as he spoke, but the Baronet appeared unconscious of his marked manner.

" It is consequently rather to spare the feelings of Mr.—— of the gentleman's connexions, and to save him from the degradation and inconvenience of rebutting the charge, and proving himself innocent of a crime whose very accusation is ignominy, that I have endeavoured to reason this woman out of her purpose, but I have tried in vain; and, thus situated, I really know not how to act for the best."

" Do your duty, my good sir;" said the

Baronet gravely: "I can well believe that it will cost you a very painful effort, but you are answerable to your country for your public conduct; and private feeling must yield to the more imperative demand of justice—but, Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, suddenly falling back in his chair: "a veil has dropt from my eyes—my happy blindness has left me—Compton! Compton! I see it all—*I* am to be one of the degraded relatives—and my wife—my poor wife—"

"Calm yourself, Bransdon, I implore of you; can we devise no possible method—"

"None, sir, none:—the disgraceful charge must have originated in malice or in mistake—be that as it may, Reginald Daubigny must clear himself from the aspersion—for his own sake he must do it—for mine—for the sake of all who have ever extended to him the hand of fellowship—must, did I say? He *will*—he has been a profligate, an iron-hearted enemy, and a false friend—but this is too much—it

is impossible—and bitter as it will be to stand beside a man accused of —— merciful Providence, I cannot bring my lips to utter it!—bitter as it will be, I say, to stand beside such an individual in a Court of Justice with the eyes of hundreds on us, still will I not shrink from the brother of my wife, for he *must* be—*he is* innocent!"

"No rational being can entertain the slightest doubt upon the subject;" returned the magistrate: "but had you not better see the woman yourself? You may perhaps be able to contradict, or at least to weaken, some parts of her testimony; and remember that in such a case as this every trifle gained is of vital importance."

"Yes—" said Sir Willoughby thoughtfully: "I will see her—I have no right to spare my own feelings in so awful an emergency as this—I *will* see her—but mark me, not to tamper with her—that were unworthy of me, and unjust to Daubigny, who will assuredly

court publicity, and invite investigation—I will joyfully convict her of error, even of falsehood; although of that, from her high character, I despair — I will do anything and everything which it may be meet for the friends of an innocent man to do:—but not a step beyond this will I go — the stain, though it be covered by a mantle, is still a stain, and it must be washed away, or the disgrace remains."—

He did see her; but no benefit resulted from the interview; Susan wept as she told her tale, when she marked its agitating effect upon her listener, but she did not waver one point in the narration; and vague as many of her statements undoubtedly were, enough still remained to chill the heart of one who knew so well the dark nature of the accused as the Baronet; not that he entertained a doubt of Daubigny's innocence, but he deeply felt how much such circumstances, when made public, would tend to deepen the shades of a character

already sufficiently overshadowed by mystery, and depreciated by profligacy.

At this period of the investigation a knock at the door of the library attracted the attention of Mr. Compton; and he opened it himself, angrily demanding to know who it was who thus intruded on his privacy, in defiance of his express commands.

"I have done so unwillingly, sir;" said Mr. Jackson as he entered; "but the circumstance would admit of no alternative:—can I speak to you apart?" And leading Mr. Compton into the deep recess of a window, he uttered a few sentences in a low and guarded whisper.

"Most extraordinary!" exclaimed the magistrate: "shew him into my private room—I will follow in an instant.—— Most extraordinary!" he repeated, as his messenger withdrew: "Sir Willoughby, may I request your presence in another apartment? Mrs. Ashton can remain here until our return."

The Baronet rose without any reply, and followed him from the library.

When the two gentlemen entered the magistrate's private apartment, they found it occupied by Mr. Jackson, who was already seated at his desk, and in conversation with a tall foreign-looking man whose countenance expressed the most poignant grief.

"I am sorry to intrude upon you, gentlemen;" he commenced, as Mr. Compton closed the door behind him. "and I am aware that my visit is ill-timed, but my errand is of such a nature that it will admit of no delay—I have just come from the Black Lion at ——, where I have been for the last ten days anxiously awaiting the return of my master Mr. Howard, with whom I came to England about three months since. He left —— unattended, but as he had informed me that the period of his return was uncertain, his protracted absence created no alarm. Judge then of my horror when I yesterday by accident encountered a

person mounted upon the horse of Mr. Howard, and learnt from him that my unhappy master was no more." A gush of tears followed the address.

"Be calm;" said Mr. Compton kindly, "are you quite satisfied of the animal's identity?"

"Perfectly, sir: Mr. Howard brought him from Andalusia, and I could swear to him among a thousand."

"In that case:" said the magistrate, "I fear that you have indeed lost your master—and what, my good man, can I do for you in this unfortunate predicament?"

"Much, sir;—Mr. Howard had jewels to an immense amount upon his person, as well as several bills of exchange for large sums; and I hold myself responsible for the proper appropriation of that property, as I am in possession of his will."

"Are you positive as to that fact?"

"I am—being fully in Mr. Howard's con-

fidence, I was present when he took the jewels from his travelling trunk."

"Did he state for what purpose he did so?"

"He simply told me that he had a friend in the neighbourhood, to whom he wished to shew some, and to give others."

"Did he mention the name of that friend?"

"He did not."

"Can you describe the jewels which you state him to have carried upon his person?"

"Readily: the first in value was a diamond necklace, which was a very recent purchase, having been bought by my master since his arrival in England; it was peculiar in its fashion, and antique in its setting—one very large brilliant linking together seven smaller ones in the form of a star, throughout the whole length of the chain——"

"Will you swear to this?" hurriedly enquired the Baronet, for the first time breaking silence.

"Without hesitation :—I am the better able to describe it, as I have had it frequently under my eye. Mr. Howard, from some secret cause, being in the habit of frequently sitting with it before him for hours, and sometimes evincing the most violent emotion during those periods."

"Proceed—" said the magistrate.

"The next thing I will mention was a ruby clasp, given to my master by some man in power at Ispahan—the device was a tiger; the eyes and feet formed of brilliants."

"This is a strange tale;" interposed Mr. Compton: "yet I am unwilling to believe that you are trifling with us."

"Did you ascertain where, when, and how your master died?" asked Sir Willoughby, before the man could reply to the remark of the magistrate.

"I was told, sir, that the owner of the horse had died at the residence of a Mr. Daubigny—that he had gone to bed in perfect

health, and had been found in the morning a corpse—and that The Elms, for such I understood to be the name of the place, was within the jurisdiction of this gentleman. Having ascertained thus much, I have come to claim that the property of Mr. Howard should be placed in secure hands until his will is read, and acted upon."

Sir Willoughby rose from his seat in evident emotion, and began to pace the floor: while Mr. Compton resumed:

"I apprehend a confusion of two individuals in your information. It is true that a stranger, who was travelling in this neighbourhood, received hospitality at the hands of a gentleman of the name you mention; and it is equally true that he died in the manner which you have described, and at the same period; but the person in question had no property whatever about him save a few pounds in money, and a ring; consequently he could not have been the Mr. Howard in question; this at least is palpable enough."

"It is an inference which I am by no means ready to admit, sir:" replied the man, "such jewels as those which I have attempted to describe were sufficient to tempt the cupidity of any evil-minded individual."

"Oh, God! this is too much—" exclaimed Sir Willoughby hoarsely.

"Impossible!" said the magistrate, "Mr. Daubigny is a gentleman of family and fortune—he is above all such suspicion—the unfortunate man who died in his house could not have been Mr. Howard."

"You must pardon my pertinacity, sir:" was the reply: "I have spent many years of adventure both in this country and abroad, in the service of Mr. Howard, and I have seen rogues of all ranks—the question of identity however is readily solved: the body has not yet been so long buried that it cannot be disinterred, and I therefore claim your permission for that ceremony to be immediately performed, in order that should my suspicions prove to be

correct, steps may be taken for the recovery of the missing property—do you, sir, refuse me this?"

"Undoubtedly not—I am not even sure that I possess the power to do so, but I certainly have no inclination to oppose so perfectly simple and natural a wish."

"I am deeply grateful to you, sir—and, now, I would ask if there be any thing necessary to be done on my part?"

"Mr. Jackson will instruct you; and as nothing can be accomplished to further your purpose until to-morrow, you will be good enough to furnish that gentleman with a detailed list of every article which you can swear to having seen on the person of your missing master." So saying, Mr. Compton passed his arm through that of the Baronet, and they left the room.

On the following day the body of the deceased traveller was exhumed; and immediately identified by his servant as that of Mr. Howard;

nor was this the only result of the disenterment, for as the man, despite the horror of the spectators, hung fondly over the remains of his master, he suddenly burst into an exclamation of vehement grief which produced the most painful effect upon all who heard it: at one moment he appeared to be about to make some communication to the bystanders; but, as on looking up, he encountered the eye of Daubigny, who had insisted on being present at the exhumation, fixed earnestly upon him, he forbore to do so; and after another long, steadfast gaze at the corpse, he turned gloomily away, and requested an audience of Mr. Compton.

The interview was strictly private; and the mystery of the disappearance of the property remained as intricate as ever. Few days however elapsed ere Mr. Daubigny was seized and committed to gaol to take his trial for the wilful murder of Henry Howard! Great was the consternation of the neighbourhood at this startling intelligence; but beyond the fact of his appre-

hension, nothing could be ascertained ; no single particular transpired, so carefully had all those concerned laboured to keep their movements a profound secret from the public. The witnesses had been privately examined before the magistrates, and their several depositions studiously concealed ; and thus, as the period appointed for the trial drew near, public curiosity and excitement were at their height.

The home of Sir Willoughby Bransdon, meanwhile, had lost all its attraction ; the unhappy sister of Daubigny was plunged into a state of the most utter misery — the misery which is born of shame—she avoided even the contact of her own servants, nor had she the consolation of pouring her sorrows into the bosom of her husband—she knew too well that the arrow which was in her own heart had smitten him also ; and every word of comfort and tenderness which he addressed to her made the wound bleed afresh ; the very presence of her lovely and innocent niece brought its own

pang—the fair girl was so unsuspicions of the disgrace which had fallen upon her; so anxious to alleviate the misery of her fond aunt, unconscious as she was of its fearful origin; that as the wretched Lady Bransdon clasped her to her bosom, she only felt the more poignantly the bitterness of her destiny.

The day of trial rapidly approached, and the assize town was crowded to an overflow. The crime of murder was in itself of such rare occurrence on that circuit, that under any circumstances it could not have failed to create extreme excitement, but, coupled as it now was with the name of a man so well known in the neighbourhood as Mr. Daubigny—the representative of an old county family—and the owner of a considerable estate, it is little to be wondered at if the interest were augmented fourfold.

At length the day came; and at an early hour the court was crowded to suffocation; Attorneys with faces of unusual importance were

busily thredding through the excited throng; and Counsel with well-lined bags were striving to infer, even if they did not possess, a superabundance of occupation; a few wagers were made by indifferent individuals on the result of the trial—for even in affairs of life and death, the Englishman's last argument is seldom wanting: and inferences and opinions were delivered with an oracular emphasis, which to the ignorant might almost have inferred the non-necessity of a jury's verdict. The Judge who was to preside at the trial was an honour to his profession—a man whose mercy ever tempered his justice, and whose unwearying patience, ready tact in seizing the nicer shades of character, and of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, rendered him peculiarly fitted for investigating so important and intricate a case.

His Lordship's charge to the Grand Jury had been eloquent and impressive, and necessarily excited great and absorbing attention. He had dwelt strongly on the apparent

insufficiency of the evidence, and recommended them, if they entertained rational doubts of its importance, and of their power to ensure a conviction, to throw out the Bill; explaining to them most lucidly and learnedly that, in the event of their availing themselves of his suggestion, any additional evidence which might thereafter be obtained, would enable the proper authorities at a future time to re-apprehend and try the prisoner for the offence; whereas, should they now find a true Bill, and, from lack of proof, fail to establish his guilt, he must thence-forward remain free from the consequences of his crime, although the after-evidence against him should be conclusive. Notwithstanding this warning, however, the Grand Jury, after much discussion among themselves, and, as it was stated, by a majority of *one* only, returned a true Bill. The general feeling was nevertheless in favour of the prisoner's acquittal: the lower classes argued that the law was notoriously lenient to the rich; while the gentry unwillingly admitted

the possibility that a crime of so revolting and heinous a description could have been actually committed by one of their own position in society.

An application was ultimately made by the Counsel for the Crown to postpone the trial to the next assizes, in order to enable the prosecution to obtain fresh and important evidence; but the proposition was overruled by the Counsel for the prisoner; who stated that to cede this point would be to condemn the accused to many months' imprisonment, when he was at that moment actually prepared to take his trial; while he further urged that the prosecutor should not have advanced so serious a charge if he did not possess the means to substantiate it. The learned Judge after due deliberation admitted the justice of these arguments, and refused to postpone the trial.

This application for delay on the part of the prosecution greatly tended to raise the spirits of those who were known to the prisoner,

and many even congratulated Sir Willoughby Bransdon as he took his seat on the following morning beside Mr. Daubigny's Counsel, on what they considered to be the inevitable result of a question which, however harassing to the prisoner, and galling to the feelings of his friends, must, they declared, inevitably be decided in his favour. The appearance of the court was highly interesting: and, notwithstanding the density of the crowd, the most perfect stillness prevailed as the Judge took his seat. Every countenance expressed intense anxiety; and it almost seemed that men's minds had not yet perfectly admitted the possibility that this extraordinary trial could actually take place. Not a sound was heard save the deep sob of suppressed breathing, when suddenly the silence was broken by the clear solemn voice of the Judge: "Let Reginald Daubigny be placed at the bar."

Then indeed expectation grew to agony; and curiosity became so blent with awe that it almost assumed a new character; not a whisper

was audible; it seemed as though the pulse of life had ceased in that vast assembly, and that men neither breathed nor moved. As the prisoner entered the dock, the eyes of the whole multitude were on him: it was the long, fixed, earnest gaze of eager and anxious hundreds, and the stoutest heart might have quailed beneath the ordeal. But Daubigny did not move a muscle; a slight crimson flushed for a moment his high pale brow, and spread over his haggard features, but it quickly disappeared; and when he had bowed respectfully to the court, and glanced with something which was the mockery of a smile towards Sir Willoughby Bransdon, he calmly folded his arms, and stood in an attitude of composed and earnest attention, which many whispered to their neighbours was wholly incompatible with a sense of guilt.

Nor was this the only impression produced by his appearance. To those who had been familiar with his person, the change effected by his short imprisonment with its consequent

agony of mind, was instantly apparent. There were no traces of emotion visible on his features, but the canker had eaten into his heart; and there was a rigidity of outline, a tension of muscle, and a dilation of nostril, by no means characteristic of his habitual expression. To those who now looked on him for the first time, his countenance, at a hasty glance, appeared to be the index of every thing that is great and good; and it required all their memories of the dark rumours which were afloat relative to his intemperate and degrading mode of life; to his unforgivingness and rancour; and to his utter worthlessness as a husband, a father, and a friend, to reconcile them to the idea that he was even subjected to so harrowing a public ordeal, let the result be what it might.

And the crowd might well be pardoned their clemency of judgment; for Reginald Daubigny did not stand in that dock like a criminal; but rather with the mien and manner of a wronged and outraged individual,

who scorned alike the blindness and error which had placed him there, and himself that he was subjected to the disgrace. He was dressed in deep mourning, and he carried in his hand a cambric handkerchief, with which at intervals he swept back the hair from his forehead ; there was not a feature in his face which was not a study, and although the curls which yet clung about his high and haughty brow were marbled with gray, it was palpable at once that care and climate, rather than time, had thus blanched them. His lips were slightly apart, so slightly that the division was scarcely perceptible, and yet they who looked more closely could trace the labouring breath as it escaped sighingly from between them. Startlingly at variance with the repose of his other features, did his long half-closed, subtle eyes occasionally travel round the court, and take in, as it were at a glance, the tempers and wishes of the multitude by whom he was surrounded : and to those who followed them in their rapid survey it was but too palpable that the calm

was merely external. Less than a minute sufficed for the scrutiny alluded to; and then the voice of the clerk of the arraigns was heard asking the usual question :—

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

Daubigny drew himself up to his full height, as if in scorn of the unnecessary appeal; and while the fetters clanked upon his legs, he answered haughtily and instantly :—"Not guilty." And such was the effect of his manner at the moment, that the reply found an echo in almost every heart.

The Counsel for the Prosecution then rose to address the jury; and his mode of so doing argued little expectation of a conviction. He commenced, in the ordinary method, by imploring them to divest their minds of all which they might have heard before they came into the box; and entreating them to pay earnest and undivided attention to the evidence, from which alone they were bound to form their decision. "Never, in the whole course of my experience,

Gentlemen of the Jury," he continued : (" and I have devoted all my best energies, and a great portion of my life, to my profession :) never, I repeat, have I encountered a case so extraordinary and mysterious as this in which I am now engaged. The prisoner at the bar, is, as I need scarcely remind you, a man moving in a highly respectable station in society—the inheritor of considerable wealth—the representative of an ancient and honourable family — a person of consequence and character—"

Here a low murmur, like the sighing of the night wind through the branches, swept round the court: the Judge glanced sternly about him ; and the restless eyes of the prisoner glared stealthily around, but the interruption was only momentary, and the Counsel resumed :—

" I am bound also to admit that the prisoner is a man of sufficient fortune to be, to human appearance, above the ordinary temp-

tation to commit so foul a crime; and yet, it is nevertheless certain that the deceased, who is stated to have had considerable property in his possession on the very morning of the day on which he visited the dwelling of the prisoner, was found to be bereft of every article of value, when his personals were searched after his death. It was therefore naturally inferred that he had either been robbed during the day, or had, in some inexplicable manner, made away with the very valuable property which he was said to have carried about him; and I am bound in candour to admit that no portion whatever of the missing property has been traced to the prisoner. It will be argued by the prisoner's counsel that no motive either of malice or revenge can be assigned as the possible instigation to so black a crime; a domestic of Mr. Daubigny having sworn, that on the entrance of the deceased into the presence of his master, he was received by him as a perfect stranger; and I have

myself admitted that the unfortunate gentleman was so much changed by length of years, care, and climate, and all those vicissitudes to which men of enterprising and active habits are peculiarly liable, that he was under the necessity of announcing himself to one of these very witnesses; but I am fully prepared to prove the fallacy of this argument by her own testimony; as she is ready to swear that the unhappy deceased visited The Elms with the specific intention of making himself known to Mr. Daubigny. Still, the perfect conviction of both the witnesses in question that Mr. Howard, on the day of his decease, was in possession of property to a vast amount, which property is not forthcoming; coupled with their detail of many extraordinary circumstances, which are pregnant with suspicion, and bear hard upon the prisoner at the bar; render it imperative, in justice both to the public, and to the accused, that the case should undergo judicial investigation. No one can

feel more deeply than myself, Gentlemen of the Jury, how bitter a pang it must cause to an individual of Mr. Daubigny's rank in life to be thus made the stare and subject of a criminal court;—no one can sympathize more sincerely than myself in the sufferings of his highly respectable and amiable connections; but, I repeat that, for his own sake and for the tranquillization of the public mind, both he and they must be content to endure all this."

As the learned Counsel paused, the stealthy glance of the prisoner again wandered round the court, while a slight curl of the upper lip seemed to testify the contempt in which he alike held the accusation and the vague circumstances on which it had been hazarded.

"The deceased Henry Howard, Gentlemen of the Jury," resumed the Counsel; "was many years ago, I believe as many as seventeen, curate of the village of Marden in this county: he was a young man of prepossessing exterior,

engaging manners, and unobstrusive piety—that I have by no means exaggerated either his moral or personal attributes, I doubt not that many who are listening to me to-day will readily bear witness. The prisoner and the deceased, gentlemen, were both at that period attached to a lady to whom I deeply regret that I am thus under the necessity even of alluding in a criminal court; the rivalry was by no means equal; Mr. Daubigny was wealthy and influential, the deceased crippled in his means, and unconnected: the tale is one, gentlemen, over which I would willingly have drawn a veil, and it is with extreme reluctance that I find myself thus compelled to lay it open to public comment—The lady is no more—she is happily spared the bitterness of this day. She became the wife of the prisoner at the bar,—she cannot justly be said to have done so by compulsion, though I fear that there is but too much reason to affirm that she was the victim of a wilful mis-

representation. At the period of her engagement to Mr. Daubigny, the unsuccessful suitor became unexpectedly possessed of a very fine income, and unable to endure the sight of her whom he had loved and lost, he suddenly quitted the neighbourhood, nor did he leave behind him a single clue by which he might be traced.

" I am now bound, Gentlemen of the Jury, to call your earnest attention to the fact that during the last interview of Mr. Daubigny and the deceased—an interview which took place in the presence of the lamented lady to whom I have made allusion, and in the hearing of one of the witnesses for the prosecution—the prisoner was incautious enough to give utterance to threats of future and deadly vengeance against the deceased—the hasty departure of Mr. Howard from Marden, however, rendered these menaces apparently abortive, and more than a sufficient time elapsed for them to be forgotten by both parties.

" The next point to which I am desirous to

direct your attention, is the fact that Mr. Daubigny, shortly after the death of his wife, which took place within two years subsequent to their marriage, also left the country without stating whither he was bound, or what were his intentions; and that he remained abroad many years—I am anxious to impress this circumstance upon your minds, as it is essential to a proper understanding of one of the main points of the prosecution. It has since transpired that the prisoner spent many of his absent years in Germany.

"The deceased Henry Howard, as will be proved by the testimony of the servant who accompanied him in his voluntary exile; (for he also, gentlemen, had been during the whole period of his disappearance absent from England;) returned to this country only a fewmon ths since: and after having regulated some pressing business in the capital, which necessary detention is stated to have appeared more irksome to him than so simple a circumstance would have

seemed to warrant, he immediately quitted London for ——, where he arrived on the evening of the 16th of May last, and notwithstanding the fatigue of his rapid journey, left that town at day-break the following morning, on horse-back and unattended; having previously informed his servant that the precise period of his return was uncertain. I shall be able to prove that, on the day of his arrival at ——, he held a conversation with the landlord of the Black Lion in that town, which clearly demonstrated his perfect acquaintance with the locality; that he enquired for many families of the neighbourhood by name, but that he exhibited no symptoms of unusual interest in the replies of the landlord, until those of Marden and Daubigny were mentioned, when his emotion became uncontrolable, and he hurriedly motioned the witness from the room.

"The next point on which I shall insist, gentlemen, is the testimony of Mr. Howard's servant, which goes to prove that the deceased

before he left his apartment on the morning of the 17th, and in the presence of the witness who had assisted at his toilette, secured about his person sundry jewels and bills of exchange to a large amount, of which a sworn list is in possession of the Court, and which constitute the property stated to be missing.

" From ——, which place the unfortunate deceased left, as I have already stated, entirely unattended, I am enabled to trace him to the cottage of another witness, which he entered between the hours of five and six on the said morning, and where he remained until noon; and I shall also be able to prove that he was then and there in possession of the property in question; part of which (one article in particular) he actually placed in the hands of the witness, while the others were accidentally visible to her, as he disengaged the jewel alluded to from among them.

" On leaving the cottage, the deceased declared his intention of spending some hours in

the woods of Marden, for which locality he appeared to have retained all his early affection, and thence proceeding to The Elms; this intention was earnestly deprecated by the witness, who had a foreboding of evil from the contact of the deceased with the prisoner. It will perhaps be asked for what reason a poor cottager should adopt such an opinion, or, having indulged it, how she would venture to hint it to a person of Mr. Howard's superior position in society—and the answer is a simple one. The tenant of the cottage, to which the unhappy deceased paid so early and so long a visit, had been the favorite attendant of the late Mrs. Daubigny; and the jewel was exhibited to this woman in order that she might identify it—On the history of that jewel I am unwilling to touch, as it is in some degree irrelevant; and I therefore gladly pass on to reply to the second objection, which however I shall do with equal brevity. The woman in question was the very individual who had

overheard the menaces of which mention has been already made; and her repugnance to a meeting between the parties was probably heightened by the recollection of a wild prophecy which has been long in existence relatively to the Marden family, but to which I cannot suffer myself to do more than allude.

"From the cottage of this woman I can shew that Mr. Howard did, as he mentioned was his intention, proceed directly to the immediate vicinity of Marden Hall; and that, moreover, he continued wandering among the well-remembered haunts of his early life until sunset, when he remounted his horse, and proceeded to The Elms. One of the prisoner's servants has deposed to the arrival of the deceased at the house of his master, and to their having met as perfect strangers—but I have proof that they ultimately recognized each other: nay, that Mr. Howard went to the abode of the prisoner for the express purpose of making himself known to him—and that they were seen in close and

earnest conversation several hours after his arrival.

"Thus far, Gentlemen, I have merely proved the identity of the deceased, and the fact of his having been in possession, at the time of his death, of considerable property which is not forthcoming. I now proceed to the most extraordinary part of the case. It will be proved, and that beyond the possibility of doubt—clearly and fully proved, that the deceased died by *poison*—It will perhaps be considered problematical how a Coroner's Jury should have failed to detect the presence of any deleterious drug—and how, in their examination of the body, they did not trace the operation of so deadly an agent—but I am prepared with a reply—the poison by which the unhappy deceased perished, was of no common nature—subtle, active, and, I am rejoiced to say, almost unknown in this country, it required an experienced eye to detect the slight and indeed all but imperceptible tokens of its presence.

An experienced eye has, however, ascertained the fact; and the same witness has readily and correctly defined the precise nature of the drug —it was supposed to be a discovery of the German chemists; and being sedative in its operations, and rapid in its effects, it emulated the deadly skill of the vampyre-bat, which fans its victim into slumber while it saps the springs of life.

"By this fearful poison it has been decided that the existence of the deceased was terminated; but that fact being ascertained, the more important and thrilling question presents itself— By whom was it administered? Is it probable that it was the agent of self-murder? the proposition cannot be entertained for a moment— it is negatived at once by the momentous circumstance that no phial nor vessel of any kind has been discovered, in which the poison could have been contained. Looking even beyond this fact, which is in itself almost conclusive, there is positively nothing to induce such a

suspicion: the deceased was wealthy, untrammelled, greatly respected, and but just returned to his native country—Is it then, I ask, probable that he would select such a moment to commit the dreadful crime of self-murder? and, having begged of you to give earnest consideration to this question, I revert to the first and most important one: By whom was the poison administered?

"Before I ask you to come to any conclusion, Gentlemen of the Jury, on so important a point as this, I consider it necessary to state distinctly the nature of the evidence which I am prepared to lay before you. The prisoner's family consisted at the period of Mr. Howard's decease, of himself, a housekeeper, and seven servants—"

Here another low murmur arose in the body of the court, which was immediately suppressed.

"I am aware," proceeded the Counsel, "that unpleasant rumours have long been

afloat in the neighbourhood of The Elms affecting the character of the individual whom I have judged it expedient to designate as the housekeeper of Mr. Daubigny; but I feel bound to declare that, however those rumours may have borne upon her moral reputation, no tongue has ever whispered aught tending to fasten upon her a suspicion of such turpitude as to justify the most austere in believing her capable of becoming an accessory to murder. That the influence of the prisoner upon the mind of a female so situated must necessarily be very great, is palpable; but we must first ascertain that he endeavoured to profit by that influence, before we are justified in insisting on its existence.

"The domestics of Mr. Daubigny, as I am prepared to shew, slept in a wing of the house completely separated from his own apartment, and that of the individual in question; the chambers occupying the centre of the building being appropriated to casual guests. Now,

contrary to the usual practice at The Elms, the deceased, instead of occupying one of these middle chambers, had been put into a room immediately behind that of the housekeeper, which was fitted up in the Italian taste as a study. This fact is a startling one—for the question naturally presents itself—Why were the ordinary habits of the establishment infringed on the present occasion? the house was free from guests, and the rooms usually reserved for them, all necessarily unoccupied. It will be proved that, by a singular accident, the nature of which I am prepared to explain, the house was watched until daybreak."

Here Daubigny forcibly compressed his lips; and, as if unconsciously, swept back the clinging hair from his forehead: but he recovered himself in an instant, and resumed his attitude of calm and subdued attention.

"I am also prepared to shew," pursued the Counsel; "that the mother of the watcher to whom I have alluded, is ready to assign

the reason of her child's vigilance, which was ultimately considerably enhanced by the extraordinary appearance of an unusual light, or rather number of lights, scattered over the face of the building — that the prisoner and the deceased were visible at an unshuttered window in earnest and angry conversation, which fact goes clearly to prove, that even although they met as strangers, they did not continue such— and that after the deceased retired, which he did some hours before his host, Mr. Daubigny and his housekeeper were long up—that when they at length left the supper-room, all was for a time perfectly still, one light only remaining stationary in the apartment of the housekeeper—but that after the lapse of a considerable interval, it appeared in the room of the prisoner, where two shadows crossed the window—that shortly afterwards the two persons left the prisoner's room, and the light disappeared for an instant:—whether those two persons went into the chamber of the deceased remains to be proved, as the windows of that

apartment open to the back of the house; but in about a minute the light and the shadows again entered the room of the prisoner, where in a very short time the candle was extinguished, and did not re-appear.

"Such, Gentlemen of the Jury, is the evidence on which the prisoner has been committed by the magistrates; but I feel bound also to inform you, that since his committal, the housekeeper has disappeared, nor can any trace of her be discovered."

As this circumstance was stated, a scornful smile wreathed the lips of Daubigny, and he threw his head back slightly, as if with subdued impatience.

"I am now come to the most peculiar feature of the case, Gentlemen of the Jury—the existence of poison I am prepared to prove by a competent witness—the expression on the part of the prisoner of dangerous and deadly threats against the deceased, I can also prove—but—and I am bound in candour to confess it

to you at the outset of the trial—the minor points on which I have just dilated, important as they undoubtedly are, and connectedly and clearly as they have been detailed to me, rest wholly on the testimony of an idiot—"

At so unexpected and startling an announcement, a visible emotion pervaded the court, and the blood flew to the brow and cheek of Daubigny as he glanced triumphantly towards Sir Willoughby Bransdon.

"Within the last week the boy in question has been strictly examined; pains have been taken to confuse and to mislead him, in order to judge of his capability of observation; but they have been taken in vain—he has not wavered a point from his original statement. The whole scene, precisely as he described it, has been acted over again, and he has readily and instantly corrected any error in the transition of the light, made purposely to mislead him; he has been placed in the dark, on the very spot where he stood that night, and he has without

hesitation described the whole scene—but—and again, Gentlemen, I am anxious to call your attention to the circumstance—as if to throw a still deeper mystery over this extraordinary transaction, or to negative his whole previous statement, he had latterly added to it a new and striking feature.

"He now persists, that after the persons had returned with the light into the apartment of Mr. Daubigny, and before it was extinguished, he twice perceived the intervention of some dark substance between the light and the window, which nearly covered its entire surface: or, as he himself expressed it, he 'saw a door opened that hid the candle,'—now, gentlemen, in the room of the prisoner there is literally nothing which can account for this appearance—the bed stands at the other extremity of the chamber—there is neither closet nor press—indeed, with the exception of the bed, the room contains no piece of furniture larger than a table, the dressing-room opening across the

passage. I shall state one more fact, and then I shall have done my duty, Gentlemen of the Jury, and it will remain for you to do yours :— within a few days there has been found in the prisoner's house, the stopper of a small bottle of a very singular formation; it is evidently of foreign manufacture, and is declared, by medical men, to be of the description used by chemists to preserve such liquids as lose their virtue by exposure to the air. To whom it belonged, or to what purpose it has been applied, however, there is no evidence to show."

As the learned Counsel resumed his seat, every eye turned on Daubigny; his agitation was excessive, and for a moment uncontrolable—a cold dew was upon his forehead, and his lip quivered; but his habitual self-command soon restored him to the same calmness of demeanour which he had so successfully maintained thoughout the progress of the Counsel's address.

The first witness placed in the box was the landlord of the Black Lion at——, who

merely recapitulated the conversation between the deceased and himself on the day of Mr. Howard's arrival at his hotel, and whose evidence was wholly unimportant.

The next witness examined was Jans Tellson, the deceased's servant. He identified the body as that of his master—deposed to the fact of his having secured the property about his person—and swore that he had discovered the existence of poison when he had examined the corpse.

"How can you be sure that the deceased died by that particular poison?" asked the Counsel for the prisoner.

"Because I had previously witnessed its effect."

"Are you a native of Germany?"

"I am."

"Had you been long in Mr. Howard's service?"

"Nine years."

"Had your master also witnessed the effect of this deadly drug?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"I think you said that you were acquainted with its operation from having administered it in your own country—pray how long a time may it be in destroying life?"

"I simply said that I had witnessed its effects—of the detail I know nothing. In the case to which I allude, the victim was dead before I saw him, and the trace of the poison was pointed out to me."

"Were you at all mixed up with the catastrophe to which you refer? or are you aware of the motive which induced it?"

"I was a total stranger to the parties—the motive was stated to be jealousy."

"Was Mr. Howard ever in possession of any quantity of this drug?"

"Never, to my stedfast belief."

"Was he in the habit of keeping poison of any description?"

"Certainly not."

The several domestics of Mr. Daubigny

were then examined, but their testimony only went to prove the arrival of the deceased at The Elms, and the finding of the corpse on the following morning.

The next witness placed in the box was Susan Ashton, who held her boy by the hand. She repeated nearly verbatim the same account as she had given to the magistrate; only interweaving with her own narrative what had since been elicited from her son.

"You are I believe, Mrs. Ashton, the wife of a poacher now under transportation?" said the prisoner's Counsel.

"I am, sir."

"And your mother was the wizard of Marden—the soothsayer, or prophetess—can you favour us with the distich which so alarmed you for the safety of Mr. Howard?"

"I can, sir:" replied Susan, and she repeated in a firm voice:

'When the first false heart wooes at Marden Hall,
A dame shall rise and a king shall fall;
When a fairer than she by a lie is won,
A deed of blood shall be dared and done!'

The prisoner's Counsel had miscalculated the effect of the words to which he had urged the witness to give utterance; for, delivered as they were with marked and thrilling emphasis, at that time, and in that place, they created extreme sensation in the court; and many an individual, who would on any other occasion have laughed them to scorn, now confessed that the coincidence was at least startling.

"Your child, if I understand you correctly, is an idiot?" pursued the Counsel hastily, anxious to obliterate the impression of the last reply.

"He is."

"Had you much trouble, Mrs. Ashton, in instructing him in his replies? He has been by all accounts a very creditable scholar."

"He has had no teacher but God and his own innocence."

"Did your boy watch Mr. Howard all day

in the woods, as well as all night at The Elms?"

"He did not."

"I cannot suffer you to quit that box, Mrs. Ashton, without congratulating my learned friend, the counsel for the prosecution, on having secured so respectable a witness—how many years longer is your husband likely to remain abroad?"

"Six," answered Susan, bursting into tears.

"It will, I dare say, appear extraordinary to many persons that Mr. Howard should pay his first visit to you on his arrival in your neighbourhood, and equally so that he should have exhibited to you the jewels which you have asserted that you saw about him; but perhaps you can account satisfactorily for both these circumstances?"

"Readily;" was the reply: "as Mr. Howard had visited —— shire for the express purpose of ascertaining the fate of my dear lady, it was only natural that he should apply for informa-

tion to those who he well knew would have died to serve her; and the simple circumstance of his having shewn the jewels to me originated in my complaining that Mr. Daubigny had parted from the necklace which the Marden family had possessed for many generations, in order to supply the extravagancies of a foreign mistress—When he saw my distress, Mr. Howard with the kindness for which he was always remarkable, drew out the diamonds to convince me that the young lady would not be deprived of her rights, as he had recognized and purchased the jewel in the vain hope of restoring it to my angel mistress—and when he learnt that she was gone, but that she had left a daughter, he persisted as I have before stated, in proceeding that very day to The Elms to deliver it up to Mr. Daubigny, in order that his child might never be aware how deeply he had wronged her."

"Do you consider it impossible that Mr. Howard should have been robbed between the

period of his quitting your cottage, and that of his entering the house of Mr. Daubigny?"

"Not impossible certainly, but very unlikely; I never heard of a theft in the Marden woods."

"No straggling poachers, think you, Mrs. Ashton, who might have considered a well-dressed stranger as fair game?" asked the Counsel pointedly.

"None, sir; however others of the gentry may have suffered from such depredators, the poor had found too many friends at Marden, to repay one of the name by outrage."

"Well, I suppose I must cede that point, as you are too competent an authority for me to hope to confute—" and the learned Counsel sat down, gratified that if he had not elicited anything satisfactory from the witness, he had, at least, succeeded in making her feel most bitterly every equivocal point of her position. As the tidings of the idiot-boy could not, of course, be received in evidence, the examination of Susan

Ashton closed the case against the prisoner; and as she left the box, the learned Judge, addressing the Counsel for the Prosecution, said that he was individually of opinion that there was scarcely sufficient evidence to render it expedient to call upon the prisoner for his defence; and that, should the Jury be of the same opinion, they would at once stop the case.

When his Lordship had stated his impression, the Jury consulted together for a brief interval, and then intimated their entire acquiescence in his view of the evidence.

The Counsel accordingly folded up their briefs, and a verdict of acquittal was on the point of being taken, when Daubigny, with a gesture of blended haughtiness and humility, addressed the court.

Every eye was fixed on him as his voice, modulated to the extreme harmony of which it was so peculiarly susceptible, was heard calmly and collectedly urging his request that his Lord-

ship would suffer him to occupy the attention of the court for a short time.

"Having, my Lord, been accused of so foul a crime as murder,"—he commenced; "having had my character assailed by the most base suspicions—my home desecrated by the idle gaze of thousands—my household gods shivered about me—my peace of mind destroyed—my name blighted—and my poor remains of life embittered beyond all remedy—after suffering imprisonment, ignominy—My lord, the very clanking of the fetters, whose iron has but shackled my limbs, while it has eaten into my heart, bear witness at this moment to what I have endured, and still endure, after experiencing a mental torture never to be exceeded, and a public disgrace never to be forgotten. Are you surprised that after all this indignity self-justice will not permit me to accept so poor a compromise as an acquittal upon the ground of a deficiency of evidence?—allow me I entreat of you, my Lord, to state my own case to the Jury, and give me, at least, the poor recom-

pense for all which I have undergone, of counteracting the false impressions which have gone forth against me, and of explaining those circumstances which now appear mysterious.—Again, my Lord, I implore you to permit me to clear my aspersed and blighted character, and to call my house-keeper, in order that she may testify to the correctness of my assertions."

The learned Judge hesitated; he endeavoured to persuade the excited Daubigny that he had better suffer the trial to terminate at once, and withdraw from the painful situation in which he was then placed; but his arguments were at last overborne by the resolute pleadings of the prisoner, seconded by those of his Counsel, and his Lordship eventually consented to his request.

Great was the excitement throughout the court, as Daubigny, having gracefully bowed his acknowledgments to the Judge, prepared to address the Jury: the silence was so deep that the quick breathing of anxiety alone met the ear, while every eye was turned in the direc-

tion of the dock. Daubigny himself was scarcely recognisable at that moment; his cheek was flushed, his eye vivid with the wild light of eager excitation, and his attitude unconstrained and energetic.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," he said as he turned towards them; "I repeat to you what I have already declared to the learned Judge upon the bench, that with such an acquittal as that which you have proposed, it were impossible for me to rest satisfied. I will not long intrude upon your valuable time, but with the means in my possession, I am naturally desirous to obtain your verdict upon much higher grounds than those of defective evidence. I am anxious to prove to you, not only that I am really innocent of the dark and damning crime of which I have been accused, but also the utter impossibility of my guilt:—but first, Gentlemen, I must be permitted to remark upon the character of the witnesses who have been brought against me—a foreign adventurer, the wife of a convicted

poacher, and an idiot!—I have borne much very much—misfortunes have come upon me—friends have fallen from me—slander has fastened on me--and I have suffered in silence, too proud to cavil at my destiny;—but, Gentlemen, when I find not only my character, but my very life, made a foot-ball for the mere outcasts of society to bandy thus, I may surely be pardoned if I indulge in a feeling of bitterness against those who have drawn down a disgrace upon me, which can never be extinguished.

"You will pardon this ebullition, for you are men and gentlemen, and there are moments in the life of each of us when nature asserts her right, and will have way.

"I am accused of murder—and wherefore? Because a traveller enters my house at nightfall, and claims my hospitality—because, being master in that house, I deem it expedient to lodge the stranger in a particular apartment, wherein, from some mysterious and inexplicable cause, he dies.—Gentlemen, was it the act

of a murderer to throw open my doors to a curious and prying crowd?—to invite investigation while the corpse lay undisturbed on the very bed wherein life had departed, open to the observation of all who thought proper to investigate the cause of the awful occurrence?—was it the act of a murderer to attend the exhumation of the body, when suspicions had been raised of unfair dealing?—would not the assassin have shunned a scene like this? And, even assuming it to be true that the deceased died of poison, does it therefore follow that I administered that poison? The Counsel for the Prosecution has laid great weight on the fact of my sojourn in Germany, because it has been stated by a witness, that the particular drug, to the presence of which he has sworn, is a production or composition of that country; yet has he suffered the circumstance of the deceased's more protracted residence abroad to pass without comment. Gentlemen, I call God to witness that until this day, I was entirely ignorant of

the name or the existence of such a poison! One of the very witnesses against me has admitted the wretched state of mind of the deceased, on learning the death of Mrs. Daubigny, and I can myself bear testimony to the absorbing extent of his attachment — what then more likely than that, in a moment of despair, he was guilty of self-murder?

"The two leading witnesses have also insisted strongly upon the fact that the deceased was, at the period of his death, in possession of very considerable property. Where then, I would ask, is this property, not a trace of which can be discovered? Am I to be degraded into a thief as well as a murderer? Am I not to be permitted to boast the single virtue of honesty?

"And now, Gentlemen of the Jury, I would implore you to remember, that although the eye of malice has watched my every motion since the fatal accident—though I have been dogged in my walks, and spyed upon in my

own house—though the most minute search has been made into every part of my premises, and that there exists not a spot which has not been laid open to the public gaze—no vestige has been discovered of property belonging to the deceased, and alleged to have been missing; nor has even a rumour ever been circulated (unsparing as scandal has been in its attacks upon me) that poison of any description has been seen in my possession.

Of the stopper alluded to, I deny all knowledge; I declare most solemnly that I never saw it until it was produced to-day in court; and I would ask whether the fact of its having been recently found in my house, to which hundreds of persons have latterly had access, ought to prejudice an impartial mind even for an instant?

"It is admitted by the witness Ashton, (whom I considered it necessary, for family reasons, to remove some years ago from her attendance on my then infant daughter) that the deceased, after leaving her cottage at noon, wandered

and, as my several domestics have deposed, I stood for a considerable time beside the bed of the deceased before I would admit the possibility of the awful fact.

"Gentlemen, I will detain you no longer; I will only ask of you to look upon me, and to read in the wasted features and attenuated form before you the history of the last few weeks. I care not for my life; I have drunk so deeply of the cup of anguish and ignominy that I am not anxious to linger over the dregs—but for my reputation—my character—my good name—I am still eager to clear myself from these most foul aspersions; and, under Providence, I rely on you to send me forth from this court without a shade upon my honour!"

As Daubigny ceased speaking, and, exhausted by the effort, leant heavily against the dock, there was scarcely an individual in the court who in his own heart had not silently acquitted him. His manly and unstudied address, his deeply impressive manner, and his apparent anxiety

to rely only on his own innocence for impunity from further suffering, all bore such an appearance of truth that the tide of popular feeling was at once turned; and the housekeeper had been called into Court, and placed in the witness' box, before the public attention was diverted from the prisoner.

When, however, she became in her turn the object of general scrutiny, the sympathy excited by her appearance was universal; like Daubigny, she was dressed in deep mourning, and wore a long veil which softened the beauty that it was too transparent wholly to shroud. Pale and trembling she clung firmly to the rail for support, until she was required to reply to the questions which were addressed to her; and then the crimson blood mantled her cheek and forehead, and the fire of blended shame and terror burnt in her large dark eye.

Her testimony went to corroborate that of Daubigny in every point; she described the arrival of Howard at The Elms, uninvited, and

about the Marden woods until dusk.—I would ask you, Gentlemen, whether the said property, (assuming it to be true that its owner was incautious enough to carry it upon his person,) was not in greater jeopardy in those woods than under an honest roof? and whether, in the hours which were then and there spent, the deceased had not both time and opportunity to dispose of, or to be dispossessed of, it?

"All the charges to which I have as yet referred are of so vague a nature that by assertion only can I disprove them; one fact however remains, to which I am enabled to give a direct and undeniable reply; a great mystery has been inferred on the subject of the transition of light on the night of the deceased's death—on that mystery, the coinage of an idiot brain, it were worse than idle to expatiate—but as the sudden dis-appearance of my housekeeper has been brought to bear upon that fable, so determinedly as to affect her character in a serious and prejudicial manner; I feel bound

to explain that I had reasons for suspecting that she might be intimidated and tampered with by the enemies who appeared resolved to accomplish my ruin, and that consequently I considered it expedient to withdraw her from such contingencies—but for the purposes of justice, for her own and for my exoneration, she is ready to appear; and being at this moment under the care of my solicitor, she may be instantly summoned to give her testimony to the correctness of my statements. From her, Gentlemen, you will learn that the deceased, expressing extreme weariness and fatigue, retired early to rest—that neither she nor myself followed him for some considerable time—and that from the moment of his quitting the supper-room, I saw him no more, until my servant at day-break on the following morning came into my apartment with the intelligence that the unfortunate man was a corpse; I repelled the rumour as the mere trembling phantasy of vulgar terror, imagining that the deep sleep of exhaustion had been mistaken for death;

"An Italian by birth?"

"A Venetian."

"Have you long superintended the domestic concerns of the prisoner?"

"Several years."

"Mr. Daubigny and yourself were I believe together in his apartment some hours after the deceased retired to rest on the night of his death?"

"We were."

"Where did the candle stand during that time?"

"On a table in the centre of the room."

"Was there only one light in the apartment?"

"No more."

"Was the closet, or cupboard, or whatever you call it, opened *once* or *twice* while it stood there?"

The witness convulsively threw aside her veil, and gazed earnestly in the face of the Counsel; but no emotion was visible on his well-managed features, and it was with a smile

of the most courtly urbanity that he repeated :—

" I am afraid that I have presumed so far on your unusual proficiency in the English language that I have not expressed myself intelligibly, for the question is in itself extremely simple ; I mean, when Mr. Daubigny had taken the medicine from the closet, did he shut the door, or did it remain open ? "

" He immediately shut it."

" So I supposed—then it was opened the second time for the purpose of replacing the bottle ?"

" It was."

" How long did it remain open on that occasion ?"

" Little more than a minute."

" The door opened, I apprehend, exactly between the candle and the window."

" It did."

" I do not remember on which side of the window you stated the closet to be situated--"

" On the left hand side."

unknown ; she mentioned the fact of his having complained of excessive weariness, and retired early to his chamber—and she shuddered as she expatiated on the horror of the whole household when they discovered that he was lifeless at day-break.

It was remarkable that the Counsel for the prosecution appeared to listen with extreme impatience to her evidence, and to all those who were attracted by his manner at the time, it appeared as though he considered the case so hopeless as to dwell with reluctance on any point which induced a further waste of time. But the spectators judged him hastily ; he was a shrewd and reflective man ; and coupling in his own mind the story of the idiot-boy, with many circumstances which had transpired during the trial, and the studiously slight and hurried manner in which the prisoner in his voluntary defence had passed it over, without attempting either denial or explanation, he could not divest his mind of an impression that

some mystery did indeed lurk beneath that circumstance.

Aware also that the witness had been absent from the court, and that she could not consequently be conscious how much or how little had transpired relatively to the movements of Daubigny and herself after they left the supper-room on the night of Howard's death, he determined on making a last effort to solve, if possible, the problem of the dark substance stated by the boy to have twice passed between the light and the window.

He accordingly expressed his intention to cross-examine the witness; and as it was to his interest to tranquillise, rather than to alarm, and thus lead her to consider his questions as immaterial, he addressed her with all the appearance of a pre-occupied mind, and as a point of duty rather than necessity.

"Your name, I think, you stated to be ——— ?"

"Amelia Varelli."

"Does the door of that closet make any noise in opening?"

"None whatever."

"Are you positive as to that fact? Have you opened it yourself, or have you merely seen Mr. Daubigny open it?"

"I never opened it myself."

"Have you ever had the key in your possession?"

"Never."

"Who generally had charge of it?"

"Mr. Daubigny always."

As the witness answered the last question, she accidentally looked towards the dock, and the effect of the look was electrical. Daubigny stood there the very embodyment of agonized despair; a cold dew had started upon his forehead, a film had gathered over his eyes, his lips were livid and quivering, his hands forcibly clenched, and his whole aspect that of one for whom hope is no more—there was no expression of shame in the convulsed and rigid features

—it was detected guilt suddenly hardened into stone.

The eye of the Venetian had no sooner rested on him, than with a wild shriek which re-echoed through the court like the wordless cry of a stricken spirit, she fainted, and fell heavily to the earth.

Deceived by the easy and inconsequent manner of the Counsel, even her woman-wit had deserted her; and she, who would have died to save the man for whom she had already sacrificed all save life, at once comprehended, as she marked the effect of her words upon Daubigny, that she had murdered him!

Medical assistance having been procured, she was carried out of court; and during the pause which ensued in the proceedings, the Counsel for the Prosecution withdrew. In a short time the gentleman to whose care the wretched woman had been confided returned into court, and stated the impossibility of her resuming, for a brief period, her place in the box; suggesting

at the same time the expediency of allowing her to rest for awhile undisturbed.

Under these circumstances the Judge directed that the Jury should be accommodated with a private room, and adjourned the Court for two hours; it was then mid-day. Daubigny was conducted back to prison, and Amelia Varelli to an apartment in the gaoler's house; strict orders having been given that she should not be permitted to communicate with any one, save in the presence of the physician.

It was between four and five o'clock when the Judge re-entered the Court, and resumed his seat on the bench, the prisoner his station at the bar, and the miserable woman her place in the witness-box. The Court meanwhile had remained crowded to excess, scarcely an individual had quitted his seat, lest on the renewal of the proceedings, he should be unable to resume it; and yet not a trace of weariness was to be detected throughout that vast assemblage; anxiety, deep and absorbing sat upon

every brow; and as the principal actors in the fatal drama re-appeared, not a whisper broke the density of the silence.

Upon two of these unhappy persons the change which that comparatively brief interval had effected, was fearful. The wretched female had passed it in alternate paroxysms of hysterical violence, and moody despair; now, she supplicated upon her knees for an interview with Daubigny, that she might obtain his pardon for having involuntarily become his destroyer; in the next moment she sat sullenly apart with her face buried in her hands, heedless of all the attempts of the physician to comfort and advise her.

She was in this darker mood, when the summons arrived from the Court, and she was gently desired to rise and follow the messenger. Instantly obeying, and drawing her veil more closely about her, she moved forward with a firm step, and without assistance. On entering the witness-box, she glanced towards Daubigny; and then slowly passing her hand across her

forehead, she awaited, without any apparent emotion, the questions which were to be addressed to her. It was evident that, in her case, anguish had subdued anxiety, and that she was now reckless of the result.

In the extremity of her agony, during those hours of bitterness which she had just passed, no word of reproach upon the man who had betrayed her to the deadliest of all crime, escaped her trembling lips. And even in the utterness of her anguish it was for him rather than for herself she suffered. Degraded as she was, mentally and actually, she yet clung with all a woman's devotedness to the author of her ruin—she remembered the early days of their friendship, when she was innocent and light of heart; and when he was—oh! what had he not then seemed to her! And now, even now, when she knew him to be steeped in blood; when she was conscious that by his means she had been made a mark for the finger of scorn, a byword for the virtuous, and a reproach upon

her sex; even now, when she could not love him for what he was, she yet clung to him for what he had been!

Nor had those hours been spent more calmly by Daubigny; on his memory also crowded bright visions of the past, but the web was interwoven with dark and frightful shades—he could not even recal the image of his pure and angel wife, for there also a curse had seared into his conscience. Nor, sinner as he was, and reluctant as he had been for many years to acknowledge a God, could he now shut his eyes to the justice which had made her, who through his own agency had become little less guilty than himself, the instrument of his probable punishment. Yet was there still a hope! a feasible and cheering hope—not indeed that his reputation could be restored, for he was conscious that his good name was gone for ever; but that his life might yet be spared by the absence of all actual proof of that which had been inferred, from the admissions

of the Venetian; and he was sanguine that such proof could not be brought forward.

Daubigny had spoken lightly of the value which he set upon his life: but when was the moral coward, and the infidel, ever prepared to die? This clinging to existence, with a strong faith in its preservation, enabled him to re-appear in Court with some shew of firmness: but the conflict within had been sufficiently violent to leave traces of its passage even on the haggard features of the prisoner. The rigidity of muscle, and stonyness of expression, which had characterized the appearance of Daubigny on his quitting the Court, had yielded to a restlessness of lip and eye, a convulsive clasping of the hands, and an eager and suspicious earnestness, which was instantly palpable to all who looked on him. His glances wandered hither and thither, as though he wanted power to fix them on any particular object; and his features wreathed themselves into a thousand varying expressions.

The cross-examining Counsel, after the lapse of a brief interval, addressed the witness :—

"I shall only ask a few more questions; but be careful in your replies, for your own life hangs upon a thread!"

"My own life!" repeated the unhappy woman, in a tone so hoarse and cold that its effect was startling: "can I yet save *his?* If there be still a hope, I will die in silence, lest my next words should destroy him—but if you seek only to save *mine*, then let me tell all—I have no wish to live."

"Tell nothing—answer simply and briefly the questions which I shall address to you—I do not require more. — Do you know this stopper?"

"I do."

"To whom does it belong?"

"To Mr. Daubigny."

"When did you last see it?"

"That night—that night"—muttered the witness convulsively.

"Do you mean on the night of Mr. Howard's death?"

"Yes—that night—that night!"

As the words passed the lips of the witness, the Solicitor for the Prosecution entered the Court, carrying a tray on which lay a jewel-casket, a roll of paper, a pocket-book, and a bottle of the same manufacture as the stopper so frequently named, but having a cork in it; there were other articles of a less important but equally decisive nature, being precisely those specified in the list furnished to the prosecution by the servant of Mr. Howard. As the tray was placed on the table in sight of the witness and the prisoner, the former struck her hands convulsively together, and with sudden energy turned towards the dock.

"Reginald!" she almost screamed; "do not curse me—I am ready to die with you—my gray-haired father cursed me as he died that I had disgraced my name—and I outlived the malediction; but do you have mercy on me,

lest I expire before your eyes—forgive me, Reginald, forgive me!"

But Daubigny did not move a limb; his dilated and blood-shot eyes were rivetted on the tray and its fatal load, and his breast heaved as the breath came labouringly through his clenched teeth. Nor when his unhappy accomplice again fainted, and was borne past him from the Court, did he appear conscious that she was present.

A few words will suffice to account for the appearance of these final proofs of his guilt. The Elms was distant between nine and ten miles from the town in which the trial took place; and the Solicitor for the Prosecution, immediately that the cross-examination of the witness Varelli had betrayed the existence of a secret closet, and its situation, had set off on horseback with a couple of sheriff's officers; and after pulling down a portion of the wall in the apartment of Daubigny, had succeeded in discovering this important place of concealment.

The result of their search has been already stated; the whole of the property of the unfortunate Howard, amounting in value to an immense sum, had been found secreted in the closet; and, to remove all doubt of the guilt of the prisoner as regarded the murder as well as robbery, the remaining contents of the bottle were declared by the faculty to be the precise description of poison by which the deceased lost his life.

A short while, and all was over—Reginald Daubigny, the child of promise, and the man of pride, stood before the assembled crowd with his days numbered, a convicted murderer. The voice of the Judge was stern and cold as he pronounced the awful sentence of the law, and bade the prisoner, who had shown no mercy, forbear to expect it, but endeavour to use his short remains of life in making his peace with that God in whose awful presence he must soon stand.

At this moment, even when the life of a

wretched fellow-creature hung upon the breath of his human Judge, an earnest whisper was heard in the Court, nor could it be suppressed; and when the sentence of the law had been declared, and the solemn address of the Judge was ended, its purport spread rapidly through the crowd.

Amelia Varelli was no more—every effort had been made to arouse her from the faint into which she had fallen, but in vain. Anguish and shame had done their work, and she was at rest!

The moon was up, and the low wind was creeping stealthily along the leaves, when a horseman, urging his noble animal to its wildest speed on the road which led from the assize town towards Marden, was nearly thrown from the saddle by the violence with which it sprang aside at the sudden appearance of two figures emerging from the deep shadow of some trees

by the way-side. As he recovered his seat, the horseman glanced towards the little groupe. No word passed between them, although each instantly recognized the other. The mounted traveller was Sir Willoughby Bransdon, hurriedly escaping in the darkness from the scene of his disgrace; and the humble foot-passenger with whom he had come in contact was Susan Ashton, leading by the hand her idiot-boy.

THE DAVENTRYS.

Which is the side that I must go withal?
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
And, in their rage, I having hold of both,
They whirl asunder, and dismember me.

KING JOHN. Act III. Scene I.

THE DAVENTRYS.

CHAPTER I.

It was yet early in an autumnal morning of the year 1190, when the chapel bells of Cheepsey Abbey rang out a joyous bridal peal; while slowly ascending the steep height on which the lordly pile was seated, a gallant train of knights and dames wound their way on charger and palfrey towards the massy gates which were already flung back to yield them entrance.

Cheepsey Abbey had, as its name implies, originally been a religious house, and one indeed even then of some antiquity, and of no mean repute. It was founded by Edgar in the year 971, (called in the monkish chronicles "*Saint* Edgar;") as a peace-offering to Heaven and the clergy after the murder of Ethelwolfe.

Blind zeal, and yet blinder superstition, had alike contributed towards its aggrandisement until the accession of William Rufus; by whose repeated and uncompromising extortions, (when under the plea of piety, he levied heavy taxes upon all religious houses, to facilitate the departure of his brother Duke Robert for the Holy Land, and thus secure his own peaceable possession of the Dukedom of Normandy,) such a ceaseless and unsparing demand was made upon the brotherhood as they were utterly unable to meet; and, despite alike their expostulations and their murmurs, the impoverished community finally beheld themselves compelled to relinquish their lordly Abbey to

his affected piety but actual rapacity, and to seek beneath a less stately roof the preservation of their poor remains of wealth.

During the brief life-time of this monarch, Cheepsey remained in the hands of the Crown; but after his tragical death it was bestowed by Henry the First on Sir Aubrey D'Avyntrie, a Norman knight who had come over with the Conqueror, and who had subsequently followed Duke Robert to the Holy Land, and stood beside him when he refused to accept the Crown of Jerusalem, only to find on his return to Britain that his own had been wrenched from him by a younger brother. The Norman knight, having suffered, or supposed, some slight at the hands of the Duke, enrolled himself and his followers under the banners of Henry, and attached himself devotedly to his interests; did him good service when the monarch passed over in person to give battle to the French Armies, where he received from the hands of Henry the prisoner whom he had secured by his royal and individual

prowess: and ultimately perilled his life in a vain attempt to preserve that of the young Prince who perished so miserably at sea in the very moment of his father's victory.

It were unnecessary to trace the loyal services of the D'Avyntries step by step through each succeeding reign; suffice it that they had been good men and true from the period of the Conquest until that at which our tale commences. One of the name had refused a barony, and they had varied their style and title only from Sir Aubrey to Sir Geoffrey, and from Sir Geoffrey to Sir Aubrey back again; save, indeed, we except the corruption which their Norman designation underwent in its orthography, as it gradually became Anglicised into Daventry.

The Abbey of Cheepsey, during the reign of Richard the Lion-hearted, the period of our history, still bore about it many traces of its original intention, fantastically blent with chivalric insignia and domestic innovation. The

Abbey chapel yet showed its dark tower and massy cross, cutting sharply against the clear sky, its deep niches tenanted by rude effigies of saints chiselled in stone, and its wide doors of carved oak; nor had the sacred edifice been desecrated by unholy uses; the stoled priest yet officiated at its altar, and the rich stream of incense still swept through its long aisle, though its days of monkish magnificence were over, and flowers were now the simple ornaments of a shrine which had once blazed with jewels.

Beneath the chapel spread the burial-vault of the Daventrys, which had formerly been fashioned into dungeons for the reception of such as had rendered themselves obnoxious to the ecclesiastical powers; or for those monkish delinquents who had been guilty of crimes which were alike too weighty to be overlooked, or to be exposed to the eyes of the laity. Deep niches, some enclosed by heavy iron-studded doors, others open to the main vault, were to be seen on all sides, many of them connected

the one with the other by passages narrow and intricate, formed in the depth of the massy wall of the building. In a few of these recesses were ranged the coffined bodies of the family; the mouldering remnants of departed mortality seeming strangely and fearfully in keeping with the gloom and darkness of the vast subterranean. The chapel was connected with the main body of the building by a flagged yard surrounded by cloisters, having in the centre a capacious basin constantly filled even to the brim by a pure spring which oozed from the rock, and was afterwards suffered to escape by a hidden channel, which conveyed the stream into the several offices of the abbey. The original refectory still retained alike its name and its character for good cheer, though it must be allowed that its sober echoes had long been exchanged for the glad pealing of mirth, the magic of minstrelsy, and the murmurs of courtly compliment. It was a stately apartment, lined with dark oak, and pannelled with

the portraits of every Daventry who had existed since the Conquest; its high arched casements admitting the light through richly tinted panes, emblazoned with the heraldic bearings of the family, and each adorned with their appropriate motto of

"Nostre Roy et Nostre Foy."

The walls were thickly hung with the spoils of both foreign and sylvan warfare, interspersed with Saints carved in the dark oak, and portraits sunk in their pannelled frames.

At the upper end of this lordly banquetting-hall, immediately facing the entrance, were displayed the arms of Sir Aubrey the Pious, who fought with Duke Robert in the Holy Land; and beneath them, stern in look, and grim with time, hung the effigies of the devout knight, helm on head, cross on breast, and weapon in hand; while, lower yet, on a parchment affixed to the wall by two Saracenic daggers, were inscribed the feats of the soldier-saint, the names and rank of those whom he had slain in

fair field, and a Latin invocation to the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Sepulchre for the repose of his soul.

To the right and left spread away, fair and fierce, the semblance of many a gentle dame and stalwart knight; nor must it be denied that in more than one recess whence Saint Barbara gay with tinsel, or Saint Anthony wielding his gridiron, had once looked forth, as if to warn the guests alike from ribaldry and from repletion, now figured some Dame Maude in her sober-coloured farthingale, or some Sir Geoffrey in his mailed breast-plate, the one smiling, and the other frowning the revellers into good cheer, and that economy of time so well understood in the olden days.

Passing by the refectory, the guest found himself in one of those long and stately galleries so usual in monastic houses, from which opened many a goodly and spacious apartment on the right and left, whose noble casements, richly-carved cornices, and ample chimneys,

told well alike for the magnificent taste and careful self-solacing of the original occupants of the Abbey.

The building was seated on the crest of a steep height, of which the difficult ascent was almost forgotten amid its beauty. Clusters of gigantic forest trees stretched their broad branches across the upward path at intervals like outlying picquets, seeming to guard the space which they overshadowed; while herds of red deer, couched beneath their cover, fled before the coming footstep of the traveller for a brief space, and then standing proudly at bay, tossed their wide antlers as if in scorn of the pigmy peril from which they had just escaped.

Deep in the valley lay a wide lake, sparkling in the early sunlight, and reflecting the stately Abbey as in a golden mirror; while on every side the gorgeous corn field, the emerald meadow, and the dark wood stretched away far

as the eye could reach, and yet the boundary of the Abbey-lands remained invisible.

Foremost in the goodly train which now breasted the hill of Cheepsey, rode Sir Geoffrey Daventry, in a rich riding suit of crimson, holding the bridle of a fair dame whose cheek was flushed even more deeply than the fresh morning breezes would have coloured it; and who sat her palfrey with much grace, and yet with a semblance of sufficient timidity to render the touch of his knightly hand on her rein necessary and pleasurable. Sir Geoffrey, indeed, seemed to have foregone the guidance of his own high-spirited animal to undertake that of the lady, for his bridle was cast carelessly on the neck of his good steed, as he moved forward with his eyes fixed on the blushing brow of his companion.

Next came the young Baron De Clancy, the brother of the bride, for such indeed she was—the bride of an hour, speeding her way to the proud home of her newly-made husband;

and beside the Baron rode the Lady Rachel Delawere, the bosom friend of the bride, and it was shrewdly whispered of her brother also. Sir Hugh Le-de-Spencer, and Sir Reginald De Tracy rode abreast, in company with the portly Prior of the Dominicans who had performed the marriage ceremony, and who was mounted upon an ambling palfrey whose housings reached nearly to the ground ; these again were followed by divers knights of good name and repute, each one riding at the bridle-rein of a fair dame, and attended by his squire, his man-at-arms, or his page. Nor must the holy Franciscan be forgotten who had guided his mule a few paces apart, and was approaching the Abbey by a less frequented, and even more precipitous road than that followed by the bridal party.

The Franciscan was a man of some sixty years upon whom it seemed as though time had sat lightly, while some deeper cause had ploughed his high brow with wrinkles, hollowed

his sallow cheeks, and it might almost be said, withered the very marrow in his bones. No one had ever seen him smile, yet no one equally had ever heard him sigh; he formed no attachments, conceived no hatreds, partook of no anxieties, and appeared to endure existence as a duty, rather than to contemplate it as a privilege. Thus at least said those who knew him the best, or rather who had known him the longest, for none knew him as he was.

Suffice it, however, in this place, that Father Dominick was confessor to Sir Geoffrey Daventry and his household; a sufficiently light task hitherto, where his lord was for the most part absent at the Court, or in the field, at the head of his followers, leaving but a slender complement of his retainers, and a few serving women at the Abbey. Punctually, during the absences of Sir Geoffrey, did the Franciscan perform the holy offices of the early mass in the chapel; scrupulously did he administer the sacrifice of confession; and rigidly did he en-

join the observance of such penanceas he judged it expedient to inflict; but, beyond these ceremonies the dependants of the knight saw little of the monk, and at times, indeed, almost forgot his existence. Stern, ascetic, and taciturn, he had none of those jovial and companionable qualities so common to his calling at the time; and consequently while he inspired some fear, he created no interest.

"Fool!" he murmured beneath his breath, as he led his mule along the difficult path which he had chosen; "he has hitherto defied my menaces, and laughed my threats to scorn—now, we shall see—we shall see—there are more roads to the heart than by cold steel—more yokes to bow the stubborn neck than the dread of personal suffering—he has himself put the torch into my hand, nor is it likely that I shall be backward in firing the pile! By the mass, but she is a goodly dame, with a bright brow, and a soft eye—a dainty dame!—and such are they ever who stab their lords in the

very joints of their armour, and give those wounds which bleed inward. Have a care, Sir Knight, the serpent hath a fair skin, but its bite is poison—" And the monk laughed, for there were none near enough to note it.

"Aye," he pursued, as the mocking mirth died away; "yonder they ride, gay in their velvet vests and feathered hats; and they heed not the sober-coated monk who has turned aside to avoid their contact—but they *shall* heed him if there be power left in—pshaw! I need invoke none other than my own. I have been trampled on—rather suffered than supported—thrust aside with a smile of pity, or thwarted without apology—and I have borne it all, for I knew, I knew that my day must come; and it *is* come, or there is no spell in the bright eyes of woman, and no danger in the disappointed passions of a blighted heart. Smile on, my delicate Lady Mabel; this is thy bridal day, and the tears will come uninvoked—smile on; the sunshine is on thy path, and the storm-

cloud will gather in its own good time. Sir Reginald De Tracy is fifty paces behind, but his eye is on thee—the good knight smiles at the empty jestings of the flagon-loving Prior at his side, but there is a frown on his heart—No marvel that he loved thee—I could have loved thee myself, had I not wearied of the subtleties of thy sex; or could I have wooed thee in a cap and feather in lieu of a monkish cowl. Ha! her palfrey has tripped, and the uxorious bridegroom has already sprung from his saddle to catchher in his arms—mark'st thou that, Sir Reginald? Aye, in very truth hast thou marked it, for thou too art at her side; how courteously she smiles her thanks to the good knight, and how gloomily he falls back to join his companions. 'Tis an evil omen, my sweet mistress, the ill-favoured brute brings thee not smoothly even to the threshold of thy new home; 'tis an evil omen; yet make merry at it—there is no need to weep to-day—" And, as the last bitter sentence trembled on his tongue, the

monk turned an angle of the building, and disappeared.

Meanwhile far different thoughts occupied the hearts and lips of the bridal party.

"Thou hast at all events played me false in this at least, Geoffrey;" said the Lady Mabel, as she commenced the ascent leading to the Abbey; "thy tale was of a tall eminence whence I was to look down like an eagle from its eirie upon the world beneath, as on a thing far from me; while I see only a grassy hill rich with trees, and bathed in sunshine, the very spot that I would have chosen on which to make my home; and for the poor roof which thou didst mock me withal, I look upon a stately pile to which Richard might not shame to bring his bride—how say'st thou, traitor; art thou not convicted of deceit?"

"No, in sooth, sweet Mabel; is not all even as I painted it? see you not the tall eminence? it may indeed be clothed in turf; but it is not the less certain that it must be clombe

at whatever cost of fatigue; and for the halls of which thou art even now the mistress, surely thou wilt admit that they are all unworthy of such an inmate."

"That will I not to a surety;" laughed the lovely Mabel; "but I pray thee tell me who is the dark monk riding apart yonder, as though he held no share in our festival—methinks he hath a look little fitted to a scene of happiness."

"Nay, lady mine, thou dost him wrong:" said Sir Geoffrey, following the direction of her hand; "that is the good father Dominick, the Abbey priest, and withal as kindly a soul as ever shrived penitent; I may not suffer thee to speak slightingly of Father Dominick."

"Nor do I, even when I tell thee that I like him not—But I am idle to talk thus;" she added after a pause: "I have not even exchanged a good-even with the holy man, and yet I venture to prejudge him."

"Thou wilt yield him better justice ere long,

my sweet Mabel, but I pray thee look not on him if he banish the smile from thy lip thus, or I shall myself find cause of quarrel with the good Franciscan."

"Shall I then bid thee let thine eye follow mine as it plays the spy on Rachel Delaware, and counts the blushes as they rise at the low murmuring of my lordly brother? In good sooth it need scarce be idle."

"Rather leave them to their wooing;" said the knight tenderly; "and let our own suffice thee—scantly have I said a word to thee to-day, thou hast been so busied by the idle compliments of a crowd; I know thee not yet for mine own, while all these are about us."

"Are they not our friends?"

"Aye, truly, one and all; or they would scarce be here now—but, sweet wife, friends though they be, I would that each were at his own hearth in this hour; I am too full of happiness to ask for revelry; and I hold that every one who tarries long beneath my roof will

do me, if not foul wrong, at least a sore displeasure."

"Now out on thee for a niggard host!" smiled the lady; "and they so bent to do thee honour—but I pray thee help me to know the features of my new home—it shews gallantly in the broad light."

"I will first point out to thee thine own bower-window:" said Sir Geoffrey; "the sun is full upon its tinted panes; and see, Mabel mine, they fling their myriad hues on yonder oak, and turn its leaves to jewels—"

As the knight spoke, the palfrey of his bride stumbled against a loose stone, and came almost to its knee, and in an instant he was at her side, with his arm entwined about her. As the reader already knows, the false step of the animal brought another cavalier to the bridle of the lady, who however retired instantly when he perceived that his presence could be of no avail, though not before the bride had smiled her thanks for his prompt

appearance; and although Sir Reginald De Tracy ground his clenched teeth as he turned away, the pang was known only to himself with which he did so.

Sir Geoffrey did not resume his saddle, but flinging the bridle of his steed to an attendant page, walked forward leading his lady's palfrey; an example which was promptly followed by the other knights; and thus, each holding the rein of a fair dame, the gallant friends of the bridegroom entered the spacious court-yard of Cheepsey Abbey.

CHAPTER II.

A WEEK passed away, a week of wassail and revelry; and then many of the noble and knightly guests prepared to leave the Abbey. The young Baron De Clancy, the brother of the bride, was among the first to depart; for he was of a feverish and restless humour, and ill brooked the quietude of Cheepsey, even although the bright eyes of the Lady Rachel Delawere were for ever beaming on him in smiles; and truly they should have possessed the power to detain a true knight, for seldom had beauty equalled that of the Lady Rachel.

Her golden hair gathered together in rich tresses; her eyes, blue and sunny as a summer sky; her lips, ripe with smiles, and brilliant as a rose-bud; her teeth sparkling as orient pearls; and her slight and elastic figure in its rounded symmetry, all combined to make the high birth and the ample dower of the lady forgotten in her personal perfections. Buoyant in spirit, and light of heart, she was a sunbeam shedding lustre wherever she appeared—a happy creature diffusing around her the glow of her own gaity. Nor was the Lady Rachel deficient in that high and haughty energy so becoming to her station and the purity of her nature: the proud blood rushed in an instant to her cheek—the indignant fire flashed in a moment from her eye—the soft voice swelled into command, and the graceful figure dilated into majesty, when need was; yet was she the gentlest and the kindest of women where she feared not treachery, and suspected not evil; candid to a fault, hating all falsehood with a

most pious hatred, slow to accuse, and eager to forgive. Left an orphan while yet in her childhood, she had clung to her gentle friend the Lady Mabel with the clinging of an affection which is incapable of change; and to her high-hearted brother, as to a faultless and unequalled being, of whom earth would vainly seek to supply the parallel.

Of a far different nature was the fair bride of Sir Geoffrey Daventry; beautiful as a houri, with eyes dark and brilliant as a midnight meteor, and a voice as low and musical as its wind among the forest leaves; tall, and stately, and graceful as a young pine tree, the Lady Mabel was at heart a very woman, timid, and trembling; ever seeking to repose on the powers of others, yet possessing a latent strength of mind of which she was herself utterly unconscious. Highly imaginative, of an excitable temperament, and quick feelings, it is scarcely matter of surprize that, reared as she had been amid the attractive, gorgeous, and somewhat mysterious ceremonies of the Romish

Church, she should have bowed her reason to its superstitions, and willingly submitted to the yoke which it placed upon her neck. To herself this blind subservience to the exactions of an encroaching Confessor, had hitherto been productive of no evil beyond that mental prostration which weakened every purpose, and paralyzed every energy of her nature; but that the seeds of much possible misery both to herself and to others were already sown by its influence it were impossible to doubt. As yet care had not touched her, treachery had not assailed her, temptation had not striven to smile her onward to her own ruin; she knew not, she guessed not, that the time might yet come when her heart would lie waste and sterile as the ashes which strew the shores of the dead sea—the barren remnants of the bright and the beautiful, passed away for ever!

The very timidity of her nature added new charms to the Lady Mabel, in the eyes of her bride-groom; nor did its attraction fail in those

of others; Sir Reginald De Tracy, a knight of approved courage but of slender fortunes, had long loved her in secret, without daring to declare his passion; of obscure lineage, so obscure indeed that none knew from what race he sprung, he had hewn out his path to preferment with his sword, and had been the architect of his own honours; of a tall and commanding figure, he rather challenged, than attracted, attention, and was infinitely more fitted to excite fear than love. No longer in his first youth, almost indeed in the autumn of his years, the few gray hairs which mingled with the coal-black locks that fell upon his shoulders, and the withering cloud which sat upon his brow, seemed nevertheless to be rather the effect of dark passions than of time; for his great personal strength was yet unimpaired, and his warlike ambition unquenched.

The young and radiant Sir Hugh Le De Spencer, who to his high breeding and noble lineage added the courtly gift of gallant min-

strelsy, had celebrated the charms of the Lady Mabel in many a chivalric strain; but he passed from her presence as blithe of heart as he had entered it; Sir Reginald De Tracy had never suffered his passion to weaken itself by words, and, like the Promethean vulture, it preyed upon his vitals. The one had a smile upon his spirit; the other had a canker at his heart.

Forth with the Baron De Clancy rode Sir Hugh De Le Spencer, and a goodly train of knights; but Sir Reginald De Tracy yet lingered. One by one all the guests at length departed, save the Lady Rachel and the dark browed De Tracy; and many a light lip joined their names, and attributed the prolonged sojourn of the knight to the soft spell of the lady's glances. But Sir Reginald thought not, recked not of the proud heiress of Delawere; there were two stronger links to bind him to Cheepsey; and he only smiled in bitterness as he listened to the jests of the departing nobles, at the dupes that he had made.

It was on a fair evening that the lady of the Abbey walked forth leaning on the arm of her friend, and followed by a favorite page who had accompanied her to Cheepsey when she became a bride; he was a gentle boy, well versed in all the courtesies that ladies love, valuing his fair mistress beyond aught else on earth, and obeying her behests with a devotion as chivalric as it was graceful. Edred, for thus was he named, walked not so immediately after the two fair dames as to intrude upon their confidence; but satisfied with ever keeping them in sight, he busied himself in collecting wild flowers, mimicking the song of the summer birds, and playing a thousand gambols in all the light-heartedness of youth and innocence.

"In very sooth, maiden;" said the Lady Mabel tenderly, in reply to some gay remark from her friend; "thou art scarce courteous to thy new suitor to nurse thus the memory of De Clancy; for suitor indeed he must be, my fair Rachel, or he would not tarry thus at

Cheepsey when all beside are wending to the Court at Winchester, to do honour to the meeting of King Richard with the Queen Mother;—truly it will be a blending of storm and sunshine when ye are wedded!"

"Now fye upon it, Mabel, I cannot bring myself to laugh at such a sorry jest; if Sir Reginald De Tracy indeed tarry to win Rachel Delawere, he were better advised to put foot in stirrup, and speed with the swiftest—"

"Sir Geoffrey affects him as little as yourself—and would fain have seen a blither guest linger so long at Cheepsey," said the bride; "but he is still welcome—a bright face and a free hall are due to every brave knight, nor will my lord be one to play the churl to any. But now tell me, sweet sister mine, (for so I love to call thee,) hath De Clancy still kept a sealed tongue, nor whispered aught more tender to his ladye-love than a few idle gallantries?"

"No more, sweet Mabel;" murmured the

damsel with an averted head; "nor know I that I desired more open speech."

"Shrewdly answered!" laughed the Lady of Cheepsey; "yet I dare venture to wager my good knight's spurs that did'st thou pledge thyself to that assurance thou wert forsworn! Fye on thee for a passive mistress; a cold brow and a frown or two would bring him to thy feet ere thou art a month older."

"I may not essay so forbidding an experiment;" smiled the Lady Rachel; "De Clancy would be scared at the first attempt, and doff his plumed bonnet the next hour to a gentler mistress."

"Can it indeed be that even I may teach thee a lesson, Rachel? trust me, so wayward a spirit as my brother's can joy in the hurricane when it is sated with the sunshine. Thou knowest it was ever said by those who knew us best, that Edgar had inherited the bold ardour of our father, while I had received for all portion the shrinking helplessness of our dead mother."

"They did thee wrong who said it!" exclaimed the damsel; "aye, most foul wrong, as they may perchance one day discover; there are fires, Mabel, which smoulder long ere they burst forth, but which when they are awakened, carry desolation with them—yet, Heaven forefend that this should be so with thee! Nor need I tell thee, kind one, that there are wandering fires, mere *ignus fatui*, which waste their strength without due necessity, dazzle for a moment, and then die of their own impotence: Cans't thou look on me, and deny this? How many times hast thou seen my brow burn, and mine eye flash, when the poor occasion hath given me no warranty?"

"I have truly seen thee uphold thine own honour;" replied the lady; "yet hath it ever been by an effort as womanly as it was wise. I had loved thee far less had it been otherwise. I would indeed that I had thy gentle daring, for truly even now, ere our bridal flowers are withered on the altar, does my husband talk of

Richard's departure for the Holy Land with a flashing eye, and a flushing cheek, which I dare not look upon—Rachel, Rachel, can'st thou not image to thine own heart the dread of mine?"

"Thou would'st tell me that the good knight hath design to wend to Palestine with his sovereign,—is it not so?" asked the damsel quietly.

"Alas! alas! I fear me that it is even as thou hast said;" sighed the Lady Mabel, as the tears fell upon her cheek.

"And would'st thou have it otherwise?" asked her companion with a haughty brow; "Shew me the knight worthy of woman's love who will linger here like a dastard, when Richard spreads wide the Banner of the Cross —Thou needest not to be told how I love De Clancy, and yet I swear to thee, Mabel, that should he prove so foul a recreant to our Holy Faith, I would pluck him from my heart, and cast him off for ever! These are not times when a maiden may wed a brave man and a true,

and look to keep him ever at his own hearth. Think'st thou that I do not joy as greatly as thyself that De Clancy is so held in honour by the King as to be even one of the four barons appointed to carry a waxen taper in the midst of the bishops at the forthcoming coronation? Or that I did not hold him in the greater reverence when he refused to purchase exemption from his vow to wend with Richard to the Holy Land, with monies which he could well have dispensed withal? It is for his high heart, and his brave spirit that I have forgotten my pride, and been unmaidenly enough to love thy brother unasked."

"Say not so, sweet Rachel, for if indeed thy love hath been unasked, yet hath it not been either unsought, or lightly valued. De Clancy is so wedded to the pursuit of arms that he makes but a cold wooer, though he is not the less an honest one; and did'st thou hear him speak of thee when none are by save he and I—"

"I believe it, I believe it, Mabel, or I had

long since taught my heart a sterner lesson—did not thy whisperings first win it for De Clancy? and have I not trusted my hopes of happiness to thy plighted word?"

"So trust them still, dear Rachel, for never yet did a De Clancy turn traitor to a good cause—but thy memory of Edgar's share in the forthcoming pageant reminds me that Geoffrey also hath been summoned to Richard's Coronation, and thus I lose my husband ere I have scarce won him."

"Now fye upon thee, Mab!" laughed the Lady Rachel; "thou art at best but a wayward child: did not the good knight try to lure thee to Westminster along with him? and did'st thou not tell him, almost with tears, that thou would'st not quit the sweet home of which he had made thee mistress, for all the monarchs in Christendom? And now, forsooth, thou would'st quarrel with the very honours which await thy husband!"

"Not so, Rachel — honour could not have found a more worthy mark — yet it is

hard that those things which are meant to pleasure him should do me sore regret—so do I love my lord that I envy every smile which he casts from him so lightly upon others."

"Ye are well mated in this at least;" smiled the damsel; "for to be sooth with thee, sweet Mab, it is even thus with Sir Geoffrey; and did I dare adventure to see one blemish in the good knight's escutcheon, I would set my finger upon —jealousy!—Nay, never frown, dear Mabel," she continued with sudden seriousness; "for I say but that which I have long thought; nor need I tell thee to-day that it ever suits my humour to fashion my discourse by my conviction, and to be plain, even where I fail to be courteous; in thy case the blot is likely enough to wear itself out of the banner, but had I been Sir Geoffrey's dame, I fear me that it would have spread until it had darkened over every fold; I am alike light-headed and light-hearted; too prone to play upon the foibles of others, and too ready to overlook my own."

"Thou dost injustice alike to my lord and

to thyself, Rachel;" said the Lady of Cheepsey haughtily; "he is as little jealous as thou art ungenerous—I like not to hear thee talk thus."

"And yet, Mabel mine, is it not better to open our eyes steadily to the truth, and thus learn by slow degress to accustom ourselves to counteract the evil, than to live in wilful blindness, and be prostrated by the first shock? The falling of the snow-flake warns the Alpine traveller—the rushing of the avalanche overwhelms him."

"Forgive me, dearest Rachel," said the Lady Mabel; "I have been hasty, and I thank thee for the lesson; yet wherefore, I pray thee, hast thou thus judged Sir Geoffrey?"

"By a thousand trifles, each unimportant of itself; nor shall I now chafe thy humour, dear Mab, if I confess to thee that they have thickened since thy bridal; and that the sudden frown, the heaving chest, and the writhing lip, have often followed upon the presence or the discourse of that same dark knight with

whom thou did'st even now couple the name of Rachel Delawere in jest—"

"Sir Reginald De Tracy?"

"In very truth, of the stern De Tracy; and trust me, Mabel, Sir Geoffrey deems not that the spell which chains him here is born of the bright looks of any save thyself."

"Of mine?"

"Even as I have said — and, mark me, Mabel; 'tis for thine own sweet sake that I speak thus openly—the good knight is right in his surmise;—'tis for love of his friend's wife that De Tracy lingers at Cheepsey."

"Traitor and dastard!" exclaimed the Lady Mabel; "for love of me! thinks he that I who am wedded to the boldest and the bravest knight in England, and withal the noblest alike in bearing and in birth, and who am myself of high lineage and unspotted ancestry; thinks he, I say, that Mabel Daventry could stoop to so foul a thing as he? He who had even a name to win, and who now that he has won

it, wears it ungracefully? And in the first days too of my bridal? Doth he take me for a light wanton ever eager for change, that he dares to affront me thus?"

"Now in very sooth, sweet friend, do we seem to have exchanged natures!" smiled the damsel; "and it is Mabel Daventry who plays the shrew, while Rachel Delawere stands by with a calm brow."

"Am I not dishonoured even by the thought?" exclaimed the Lady of Cheepsey with a flashing eye.

"No in truth;" was the reply; "the dishonour rests with him who conceived it; and now remember, Mab, what saith our old proverb, 'forewarned, fore-armed.'"

"Yet how to justify myself?—how to let even the false De Tracy know that he hath done me foul wrong?"

"Simply in this wise —"

"*Benedicite*, my daughters," said the low voice of Father Dominick, as the Lady of

Cheepsey and her companion turned an angle in the wood, to return to the Abbey by a path which ran parallel with that which they had already pursued; and looking up, they perceived the Franciscan and Sir Reginald De Tracy standing before them.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days subsequent to the dialogue which we have detailed in the last chapter, Sir Geoffrey Daventry after a tender, and on her part, tearful leave-taking with his young wife, departed to join the King at Winchester; nor had De Tracy any pretext on which to found his longer stay at Cheepsey; and accordingly the two knights rode forth together. The train of Sir Geoffrey made a fair shew as they wound down the face of the hill, and even the

Lady Mabel, though her heart was heavy, wiped away her tears to gaze upon the gallant spectacle.

"Is it not spirit-stirring, lady of Cheepsey?" asked her friend, as together with the Franciscan, she stood beside her hostess, watching the departure of the train; "how gaily do the bright weapons glisten in the sunshine, and how gallantly doth the plume of the good knight wanton in the light breeze!"

"Of which knight, and of which plume speak you, daughter?" asked the monk curiously. "I see two yonder."

"Of which should I speak, save of the Knight of Cheepsey?" demanded the Lady Rachel in reply; "said I not 'the good knight.'"

"Methought," retorted the Franciscan with affected humility; "Sir Reginald De Tracy had also done good service for his spurs."

"Of that I know little, and reck less;" said the damsel haughtily; "it is not the wont of the

of the Delaweres to bend their thoughts to the fortunes of an adventurer."

The monk made a hasty gesture of impatience, and his sallow cheek crimsoned for an instant; but he restrained the feeling as it rose, and in the next moment was calm, and pale, and unimpassioned as his wont.

Meanwhile the Lady Mabel shrank beneath the sinister expression which had for that brief interval convulsed the features of the Franciscan; nor could she refrain from wonder that a light word, spoken in disdain of a knight with whom he had made acquaintance so lately, and had enjoyed such brief communion, should thus affect him.

"It is strange," at length remarked Father Dominick, seeming rather to give utterance to a passing thought than to address either of his companions; "it is passing strange that a man should spend some of the best hours of his existence in striving to win the love of a fair

dame, which he hath no sooner secured than he forsakes her."

"Father!" exclaimed the Lady Mabel tremblingly.

"How, say you, Sir Monk?" asked her companion in a tone of proud rebuke; "speak you of your good lord and patron?"

"Pardon me, fair daughters—" said the Franciscan with an affected start; "I knew not that I had suffered my thought to shape itself into words—I pray you pass by my remark, it was but too ill-timed, though mine apology must be that it grew out of my reverence for the Lady Mabel, of whose tears I had just been witness; and in my simplicity of heart I deemed that had I been a noble knight, as I am but an humble monk, I should rather have lingered in mine own home beside so peerless a bride, than have sought fame or fortune where she was not."

"Had'st thou really been a noble knight, thou would'st have scorned such dastard bear-

ing;" said the Lady Rachel, as she turned from the pale brow of her friend to look her scorn upon Father Dominick; "thou can'st know little of the chivalric ardour of high hearts, and less of the duties which are dear to them—and methinks it is scarce becoming in one who sits at the board, and rests beneath the roof of the Lord of Cheepsey, thus to cast a reproach upon his actions — let like judge like, Sir Monk, and I pray thee meddle not again with a quarry which is above thy swoop."

As the damsel spoke, she turned away from the Franciscan as haughtily as though she held herself demeaned by so poor a controversy; while the Father, bending his head in all seeming meekness to the rebuke, vowed inwardly that the proud dame should one day rue the taunt.

"Thou art warm, sweet Rachel;" said her friend; "and hast wounded the good father, which I dare aver thou didst not look to do:—

he could not mean to speak slightingly of my lord."

"The pious father best knows what he meant, Lady;" was the reply: "as for myself, I am ready to see a deeper purpose in his words than is seemly to his holiness—nevertheless if I have wronged him, I am ready to avow and repent my error."

"There is no need, daughter;" said the monk, in an accent which although low and deferential, had yet in it something sinister and startling; "there shall be no need—the lowly Franciscan seeks no concession at the hands of the noble heiress of Delawere; Father Dominick the monk, can ask for no apology from the high-born Lady Rachel."

"Nay, not so, father;" said the damsel hastily; "I spoke but as the friend of the Lady Mabel, whose peace of mind thine ill-judging words were well suited to disturb: I bade thee respect the high station of thy lord, I was regardless of mine own."

"Enough, daughter, enough;" replied the friar; "I am never likely to err thus again—a servant of Holy Church needs not two lessons; and it may yet chance that the Lady Rachel Delawere will have proof how Father Dominick hath treasured the rebuke!" And bowing lowly to the fair friends, the monk drew his cowl deeper over his brow, and walked slowly away.

"What hast thou done, Rachel!" exclaimed the Lady Mabel so soon as they were alone; "surely there is little policy in thus angering a churchman."

"Trouble not thyself for my quarrel, sweet Mab;" laughed the damsel; "had it been thee, [illegible] indeed there had been danger; for I dare be sworn that the sallow monk had made thee pay dearly for the jest! For mine own part, it moves me not; I ask no shrift of Father Dominick; for ere long I shall be far hence, donning my satin damask and cloth of gold, to do honour to the anointing of our

brave monarch, and giving no thought to churchmen, save indeed thy dark-eyed brother should yield me cause to smile on one at least, who may help me to fetter my truant tassel-gentle, and to fasten his jesses."

"Dear Rachel, thou art irreverent."—

"Not a whit:—but I forgive thee the rebuke, sweet Mab; for I suspect that thou art even now sighing over the penance which awaits thee for—for—shall I tell thee for what, Mab?" and she glanced archly at her companion; "for every tear shed for thine absent lord—six *paters* and an *ave*—for every kiss when ye meet again—who shall say what the pious monk will adjudge? no wonder thou art scared, Mabel—but enough of this fooling: out of my very love, I pray thee trust not this subtle friar—I could have passed by his words, evil though they were, but I saw his dull eye light as he uttered them—I looked into his soul; and once more I tell thee, trust him not."

"Rachel, I tremble lest thy bold speech

draw down ruin on thy young head—is not each servant of the Blessed Cross above all questioning, and beyond all suspicion?"

"I would they were, sweet friend, in more than custom—I tell thee, Mabel, that were Rachel Delaware a belted knight, she would peril all for the Faith, but she cannot worship sin even though its brow be veiled by a cowl, nor hypocrisy though it be shrouded in a cassock."

"Indulge not in such freedom of speech, Rachel; many have suffered deeply for a less sin: if thou dost indeed deem that the stern Father is more crafty than beseems his holy calling, therefore the more should'st thou put a guard upon thy lips, lest thou should'st thyself arm him with a weapon to thine own despite."

"Mark me the newly-made matron!" laughed the Lady Delawere, as she clung to the arm of her friend, and turned her glowing cheek playfully towards her: "how well she

plays the monitress! well, well, I will e'en profit by the lecture, and bear myself more mildly to the dark monk—yet again, Mabel, I say—beware of him!"

"Nay, sweetest, what should I fear? while I am true to Mother Church, and honest to my good lord, (and may Heaven receive me to itself ere I fail either towards the one or the other!) I can have no quarrel with the friar—moreover, Sir Geoffrey deems him trustworthy and true-hearted, and that should and shall suffice me."

"Sagely decided, Mab: thou playest thy part well; would that I had thy teachable spirit; though I would fain acquire it without thy beat of heart, for thou art trembling even at this moment. And now, change we the subject—and let me once more chide thy untoward churlishness which will not make all Westminster learn to covet the bride of Sir Geoffrey Daventry—marry, thou hast begun by times to play the huswife! were it I—how

should the Court blaze with my brilliancy—how many lovers—in all honesty and good-faith be it understood, sweet Mab!—would I have in my train, to teach my good lord to feel the full extent of his surpassing fortune—how daintily would I smile and sigh, and play the bride; while thou art content to abide here and enact the widow before thy time, though thou art free to don thy gayest garb, and to be a Queen's guest. But it is not yet too late to revoke thy decision, and I pray thee to think better of it—How say'st thou? We will deepen the glow of thy dark eyes by a robe of thrice-piled velvet of the richest crimson, with hanging sleeves of cloth of gold; and overlay it with a star and stomacher of brilliants—so much for thee, sweet Mab; while for myself, I shall e'en be content with an azure satin damask relieved by cloth of silver, and looped with pearls—for I need surely not tell thee how much De Clancy affects me in that garb: by my faith, Mab, we should

break upon the sight of the court-gallants like the embodyment of morn and midnight! It must be so, fair dame, and thou shalt not say me nay."

"In sooth I must, dear Rachel; I care not for the Court, nor am I greedy of any praise save that of my husband; and he loves me better in my sober-coloured garments than in more gorgeous apparel; therefore, even as thou wilt don a robe to match with the soft blue of thy sweet eyes to pleasure Edgar, so shall I keep house at Cheepsey without any bravery, to win a smile from one who is as dear to me—Hast thou not warned me, Rachel, that Geoffrey hath a fault? hast thou not prayed of me to bear it ever in mind, and thus conquer it by my loving duty? and would'st thou counteract thine own good counsel by seeking to make me eager for idle shew, and empty flatteries? Away with thy vain sophistries, light-headed maiden, and seek not to delude Mabel Daventry to her own undoing by thy specious conceits."

"As thou wilt, then;" said the damsel smiling; "nevertheless it irks me much to leave thee, sweet Mab, even in this enchanted Abbey, with dark Father Dominick for all society, while I am myself full of gay visions and gorgeous fancies: and truly, if thou art not to be tempted from Cheepsey by a King's crowning and a Queen's smile, I but waste mine eloquence upon thee to no profit, and must e'en let thee act by thine own free will with the best mood I may; telling thee however, Mab, that I would not be absent from Westminster myself for a knight's ransom."

"And thou art right, pretty one;" said the Lady of Cheepsey; "thou art yet unwedded, and thy beauty is too bright to be hidden in mere wantonness---nor do I fear that De Clancy will be a whit less dear to thee though every noble at the Court of Richard should do it homage."

"From my soul I thank thee, Mabel;" said the Lady Rachel, instantly subdued by the con-

fiding affection of her companion; "thou hast not to learn to-day how my words ever outrun my reason; nor how little the light head in my case bespeaks the light heart; were it otherwise, I were alike unworthy of the brother's love, and the sister's friendship."

"Now out upon thee, madcap!" smiled her friend; "I can scarce follow the changes of thy humour; the mocking smile is yet upon thy lip, and lo! here is a tear in thine eye, looking like a drop of dew under the sun-shine —what a Protean bride will De Clancy win, with a mood a minute! But methinks the air grows chilly, Rachel, and we had better in, ere it chace the roses from thy cheek, and mar thy brightness."

"As thou wilt;" was the reply, and in a graver humour than was her wont, the Lady Rachel followed her stately friend into the Abbey.

CHAPTER IV.

The Lady Rachel might well be forgiven her anxiety to join the Court at Winchester, where her guardian the Earl of Pembroke was to sustain a proud part in the coronation pageant; and where his influence had already obtained for her the kindly countenance and favour of the Queen-Mother. Another motive however, mingled with her girlish and buoyant fore-taste of admiration and magnificence which induced her to quit Cheepsey only a few days subsequently to the two knights—one of so peculiar

a nature that she did not breathe it to her friend; nor did she suffer her own thoughts to dwell upon it, when she could divert them thence.

"Come hither, Albert;" she said on the very day of her return to Westminster, to a pretty boy who acted as her page, but whose large keen dark eyes, and raven curls, told a tale of his Israelitish origin which might have seemed sufficient to preclude him from filling so important an office about the person of a Catholic lady of rank in those bigotted times: "come hither, and tell me if thou hast done me good service here in London, in the affair thou wottest of, while I have been away at Cheepsey? what! no reply, boy?—can it be that thou hast failed?"

"Not so, Madam;" was the reply; "and yet even so, in sooth—that is, I have not the pearls, although I offered to ransom them with jewels of thrice their cost—and still thou mayest hold them during the pageant, and for twelve

clear days after it during the Court revels, without other surety than thy fair word."

"Go to, urchin!" laughed the lady; "that is an idle tale—know I not that thy tribe hath not a more griping spirit than Ben Abdel? he is not the man to trust any so lightly."

"And yet, lady, I tell thee true; if thou wilt see his daughter Miriam this very evening, she will render up the pearls."

"Can this be?" mused his mistress; "nay, nay, this must be mere juggling! I have no faith in the generosity of a Jew."

"That may be, Madam:" said the boy firmly: "and yet may our people not be the less deserving of trust—we have been long an oppressed nation, and the bread which we eat in strange lands has been ever thickly overspread with contumely and disgrace — but there is that within us, lady, which shall yet redeem alike our honour and our station—a spark now smouldering, which shall ultimately kindle into a far-searching fire—a hidden mountain-spring,

which when it finally bursts into light, shall widen and deepen into an ocean-seeking river—the scattered atoms will yet be collected and cemented—the severed members become once again united to one body—it must be so—it will—"

"Thou art oracular, child!" smiled the lady: "but I prithee explain thine enigma, and pass by thy prophecy."

The fire of offended feeling flashed for an instant from the eye of the boy; but in the next he bent his head in meek humility, and obeyed.

"I sped to Ben Abdel, Madam, on the very eve of your departure, but I found him not; yet was not mine errand bootless, for Miriam, the only child of his dead wife was there, and she bade me tell my tale. For a while she did but shake her head, as who should say, 'Thy reasons avail not'; but after a time, when I had whispered to her the name of my honored mistress, she listened as I never before saw knight or

lady listen ; and she drew her breath hard, and swept back the shining braids from her forehead, and smiled sorrowfully, while she replied : 'Hie thee to thy mistress, Albert—for so I think the Christians call thee—and tell her that on one condition (and it is not a hard one) I will restore to her the pearls costly as they are, for twelve days without fee or reward — but should she refuse the boon, not the ransom of all the chivalry of England shall redeem them even for an hour."'

"Now a plague on mine improvidence which hath brought me to such a strait!" exclaimed the lady "how know I what this Jewish woman will require?"

"That may be soon learnt, Madam," said the page: "if I am suffered to bring the maiden hither at dusk; none other than myself need see her."

"And should my lord of Pembroke chance to find that I have invited one of thy race beneath his roof, how thinkest thou he will brook

the tidings? Had I not tears and prayers to use, aye, and perchance somewhat of a sterner temper, ere he would suffer thee, child as thou wert, to mingle with his menials? How may I account for such a step? It were seemly of a surety to tell him that his ward hath made herself a beggar by her follies, and a borrower by her necessities! No, no, Sir Page; I have adventured much, but this is beyond even my daring."

"I see no risk in the procedure, Madam and my fair mistress; while I can foretel much conveniency, perchance to both parties, in an acceptance of the proposal — Ben Abdel is wealthy, very wealthy; he loves his daughter beyond gold or diamonds, and at her instance would do much; if it be but the danger of discovery which withholds thine approval from the scheme, then would I boldly say, trust to the poor wits of thy page in this passage, and if he fail, put him forth for a heavy-handed and a shallow-headed boy, unworthy thenceforth to

whisper love-messages in a ladye's bower-chamber."

"Thou hast had but poor practise in that portion of thy calling, at least;" said his mistress, smiling even amid her perplexity.

"Not so, Madam;" replied the bright-eyed urchin with an arch look; "or I have done foul wrong to more than one gallant knight, and courtly noble, for the sake of him you wot of—truly have I drawn down upon me the grave displeasure of my Lord William De Patrike, Earl of Salisburie, yet was I not cowed by his stern looks, nor his loud threatenings, when the fair Baron De Clancy bade me say him nay in my lady's name—nor did I hearken the more to the honied sentences of the gay knight of Coweland, when the brother of the Lady Mabel Daventry taught me mine answer."

"Now out upon thee, braggart!" said the Lady; "have I not heard the tale of those two doughty wooers until it hath grown stale and

wearisome? I prythee rather employ thy poor wits in winning over yonder grasping Israelite to yield up my jewels, for I tell thee, boy, I have pledged myself to appear in them at Richard's Coronation, and they *must* be forthcoming."

"And so they will, Madam; the daughter of Ben Abdel will bring them in her hand."

The Lady Delawere did not immediately reply, but she leant her cheek upon her hand, and abandoned herself to a deep, and as it seemed, by the involuntary sighs which occasionally escaped her, not altogether pleasurable train of thought. The page meanwhile, stood silently before her, awaiting the termination of a reverie whose somewhat protracted duration failed to weary either his patience or his temper.

It was a scene for a painter. The Lady Rachel was seated in a tall, high-backed chair of quaintly carved oak, whose lofty central arch was surmounted by the crest of the Pembroke family, and whose far-reaching feet terminated in large balls grasped by a lion's [illegible]

its cushions of crimson damask threw out her slight figure, wrapped as it was in a loose robe of soft white muslin, into broad relief; her cheek was pale, very pale, and her golden hair fell around it like sunbeams upon snow, while her eyes were veiled by their long lashes as they rested on the table over which she leant, and which bore an illuminated missal, the Life of Saint Catherine of Sienna lying open with a rosary of jet between its leaves, and a long-necked bottle of essence beside it, a jewel-case, and a flask of Hungary water. A few paces apart stood the page unbonnetted, in a gay suit of blue and silver, with a feathered cap in his hand which he swung slowly to and fro, while he awaited with his eyes fixed upon the Lady, her ultimate decision on the question which now occupied her mind. The apartment was richly hung with tapestry, the work of Maud, wife to the Conqueror, and her ladies; which depicted according to the fashion of that age, the Conquest of England, and the defeat

of the Saxon Harold. A few withered flowers were strown at the feet of the Lady Rachel, and an embroidered glove lay near them; she had flung them from her, as she passed from the presence of her guardian to the solitude of her own chamber; and now as her eye accidentally fell upon them, she started, and at once aroused herself from her abstraction.

"I fear me that it must be so, Albert," she said slowly; "for myself and the Lady Alice Leicester have been long agreed to appear in the same garb, and I know not what excuse to offer for my defalcation—arrange, therefore, the meeting according to thy best wit—I would not that even my women should see this Jewess."

"They shall not need, Madam; I will bring her hither by the north stair, cloaked and veiled; and even should she be seen, none will guess her errand; for trust me, lady, there is many

a fair maiden whom you wot not of, afoot in my lord's mansion."

"How now, Sir Page?" exclaimed his mistress; "no more of this, I command thee—would'st thou abuse mine indulgence by light tales and ribbald jests?"

"No, truly, Madam, and that I may not offend further, I will hence to the dwelling of Ben Abdel, and crave an audience of his daughter."

"Thou wilt not travel city-ward in that garb?" said the lady.

"Of a surety no, Madam, or mine errand were not long a secret one; I will resume the cap and cloak of my tribe, no other raiment were either safe or seemly in such a neighbourhood."

"Perchance this Jewish woman will let thee do her errand," said the Lady Rachel hastily; "my heart fails me when I think of receiving her beneath this roof; she can have

nothing to say to me which thou may'st not deliver."

"I should deem otherwise by her earnestness:" replied the Page steadily; "I tempted her to that step when we last met, but she looked scorn upon me for my daring, and bade me do mine office, and depart."

"She was over-bold methinks for one of her degree."

The boy smiled proudly; "Little doth the Christian comprehend the pomp amid which the daughter of Ben Abdel sits day by day, as careless of all the splendour by which she is surrounded as the noblest-born Dame in the land! There is not a gem in the Indian mines, lady, a perfume in the Indian Isles, gold in the far East, or luxury in the soft South, which is not poured out at her feet. Look at her dwelling from without, and you would deem it a hovel—enter, and you will feel that you have set foot into a palace. She hath as rich stuffs overlaying the floor of her apartment as will

be donned by the Queen-Mother on the day which makes her son crowned King of England—as costly jewels in her hair as might lead one of wild fancies to believe that some impious spoiler had pilfered midnight of its diadem, to set the stars upon the brow of the dark-eyed daughter of Israel—See her as she sweeps her gemmed fingers over the pearl-inlaid theorbo, and behold upon her small hand wealth enough for a courtly dowry—look upon her as she moves across the floor, and admit that she hath beauty more than sufficient to blind the Christian to her creed, even had fate beggared her!"

"Now, by St. Catherine of Sienna, hath my pert page turned poet!" said the Lady Rachel; "and almost made me eager to behold this wonder—but surely thy limning is over fine for an usurer's daughter!"

"Thus of a truth do the Christians read Ben Abdel," returned the page; "but his tribe hold him in deep reverence as one who hath

authority over the people—much of that which he hath wrung from the enemies of his nation doth he freely scatter among his brethren; for selfishness, that mental avarice which levels man with the baser animals, is all unknown to Ben Abdel; and, although his eye may seem dull and soulless to the needy merchant who traffics with him on Change, or to the spend-thrift noble who meets him secretly to barter his broad lands for gold, yet can it light up as he gazes on his daughter's beauty, and grow soft beneath the influence of her smile—He hath a heart, Madam, which indurated as it may appear to the enemies of his people, casts off its harsh surface at the bidding of the child of his lost wife, and becomes gentle, and pity-ing, and tender as a woman's; the tiger, which gloats and gorges itself on the garbage of the world's necessities, softens into a very lamb at home, and may be fondled by an infant—the usurer who wrings blood from the heart of the prodigal, would pour forth his own unsparingly

at the bidding of a weak maiden, and to see her happy lie down to rest for ever."

"Subject for a romaunt!" smiled the Lady Rachel; "the very model for a Christian father! Of a truth thou hast done more to induce me to admit this Jewess, boy, than even mine own necessities, urgent as they are."

"Then have I wrought out my purpose, Madam," said the page; "curiosity is often the step-dame of favour, and I pray that it may prove so here. Miriam pines to look upon the Christian maiden who had pity on one of the persecuted race, and who smoothed the pillow of death by that promise of protection to a helpless orphan which hath been so piously performed."

"And thou thinkest that she will not fail me with the jewels?"

"I would peril my life upon her truth—the daughter of Ben Abdel knoweth not deceit."

"Away then, Albert;" said the Lady Dela-

were; "I will receive her at the seventh hour, and even excuse myself at the evening banquet that I may commune the longer with this prodigy of thine—Thou art sure," she added after a momentary pause, "that none seek to do me treachery?"

"Madam," said the boy with a proud sadness which lent an energy to his manner far above what might have seemed suited to his extreme youth; "am not I the messenger between thee and them? stand I not here clad in thy livery—do I not sit at thy board, rest beneath thy roof, and drink from thy cup? Am I not the orphan to whom thou hast been alike mother, friend, and mistress? And dost thou fear that thou hast lavished thy favours on an ingrate?"

"Nay, Albert, not so, I have wronged thee by the doubt—away then, my fair page; and bear with thee this ring in token to the Jewess that I await her visit; let not any

of my maidens enter until I summon them—I would be alone awhile."

And as the page made his parting obeisance, the Lady Delawere rose, and passed into an inner apartment.

CHAPTER V.

The confusion consequent on the preparations for the forthcoming pageant rendered the task of the page comparatively easy, for the domestics of the Lord Pembroke were severally occupied in their individual avocations, and consequently less regardful of the ingress of strangers than was their wont; nor did the light footstep of the Jewish maiden, as she thredded at dusk the long galleries of the stately mansion under the guidance of her silent conductor, awaken one enquiry, or

attract one listener beneath a roof where the clanging of armour, the clashing of weapons, and the brawling of retainers and men-at-arms were loud and incessant.

The assent which had been wrung from the Lady Rachel, partly by the importunities of her page, and partly by the desire to gratify her own highly-excited curiosity, involved more danger to herself than can be perfectly understood in these days; and indeed more than, had she been less free of port and speech than she was known to be, it might otherwise have entailed upon herself. In our times the contempt professed for the Jews is rather expressed than felt—the impulse of habit more than of choice—interwoven with our religious associations, rather than with our personal antipathies; but in the earlier ages, when Catholicism was the one far-stretching and suspicious faith which saw an enemy in each who was not either a disciple or a proselyte, it was far otherwise; and communion with a Jew was

held to be of itself sin, while its indulgence by one who affected to hold even the most worthless of the church-servants amenable to blame, constituted a transgression tenfold more weighty.

How recklessly the Lady Delawere gave utterance to her distastes and suspicions has been already shewn; nor will it consequently be considered extraordinary that when, in addition to her unguarded expressions, she had actually received into her household a Jewish boy in the important capacity of page, her actions were under a surveillance of which she was alike unconscious and unsuspicious. That a feeling of pure benevolence to a bereaved and destitute orphan had alone prompted her to the latter act, availed her nothing in the eyes of the priesthood, to whom the very presence of the young Israelite was pollution, as he chanced to cross their path; and not all the expostulations of Lord Pembroke could induce the Lady Rachel to believe that so simple, and,

as she argued, so unimportant a circumstance could prejudice her after-life.

To her, the attachment almost approaching to idolatry, with which the boy repaid her charity, was a sufficient earnest that her resolution was not in itself worthy of blame; and satisfied with the approval of her own conscience, she closed her ears to the more worldly arguments of her noble guardian, and rather increased than diminished her favour to the orphan. Thus, while those whose too lavish expenditure, or profligate habits, rendered an occasional communication with the Jewish people indispensible to their personal indulgence, and led them to assume various disguises, and appoint particular periods for their meetings, the young heiress of Delawere in the mere carelessness of her spirit, adopted one of the persecuted faith into her household, honoured him with her confidence, and cherished him with a gentle tenderness which in the eyes of the pious amounted to heresy.

Prompted by some unusual and unnecessary extravagance, the Lady Rachel had a short time previous to her visit to Cheepsey so encroached upon her finances as to find herself considerably embarrassed; and shrinking with all the sensitiveness of a first fault from exposing her difficulties to her guardian, she had, with her ordinary recklessness of consequences, preferred a prospective difficulty to a present annoyance; and through the medium of her page, raised a considerable sum of money upon a costly suit of pearls which had been the bequest of her mother. Now, when a necessity for their display had arisen and she still found herself unable to reclaim them, her annoyance had proportionably encreased, and she found herself under the necessity of endeavouring to ransom them by jewels of yet higher value; the success of her attempt has been already detailed, as well as the circumstances which had grown out of the negociation.

Evening had closed in, and the Lady Rachel stood in the midst of her wide apartment which

was lit only by one small lamp of chased silver, whose light failed to penetrate to its vast extremities. There was a cloud upon her brow as she paced to and fro the tapestried floor, and at times sang in a subdued voice a few snatches of a court-ballad; but suddenly she aroused herself from her reverie, and murmured beneath her breath:—

"Truly, Rachel Delawere, thou art a doughty damsel to be scared at thine own shadow! Where is the danger of this interview? None can penetrate the disguise of the Jewish maiden, nor will any note her entrance beneath this roof, or guess that she comes hither at thy bidding. And even though they should do so—what treason can be hatched by two poor women under the roof of my loyal Lord of Pembroke? Out upon such folly! Beshrew me, but I am eager to look upon this paragon—how will the dark-eyed daughter of Israel measure the beauty of the fair-browed Christian?" And the Lady Rachel walked towards a mirror, and

looked long and earnestly at the lovely reflection which it presented, as she pursued her train of thought: "Did not the boy say that she trampled under foot the thrice-piled velvets of Genoa? By my faith, but she is costly in her tastes, and should not see the heiress of the Lord Delawere bear upon her person a stuff over which she herself treads, regardless of its value—" And as she spoke she cast from her shoulders the ermine-bordered mantle in which she had been enveloped; "Her jewels too—the page spake bravely of them—the spendthrift maiden who pawns her pearls to pander to her necessities cannot hope to compete with the Jew's daughter who bears about her the forfeited pledges of half the nobles in England!" And once more she withdrew from her brow the diamond star which had glittered like a thing of light among her long fair ringlets:—

"Marry," she resumed, as she laid the bauble aside; "but this were subject for a

court jest! Am I indeed thus moved by the expected presence of a Jewess? I have done well, however; a high-born damsel should not bend to compete in aught with one of the despised and outcast race, who thrive upon the ill-fortunes and the improvidences of their betters; let the Jewish maiden blaze forth therefore, in her magnificence, while Rachel Delawere stands proudly by, unindebted to art for any poor attraction which she may boast—aye, even this slight circlet of rubies shall quit my fingers, the regally-clad Jewess would look scorn on so mean a gaud—and now;" and she laughed as she glanced yet again at the mirror, and beheld herself divested of every ornament, standing there in a simple wrapping dress of white silk like one of her own serving maidens, save that the pride which sat upon her brow, and danced in her bright eye, was all her own: "Now, indeed, the strife of pomp is over, and the victory not worth the winning—" and with tenfold more haughtiness than she had ever

worn when in the presence of the assembled court, she turned away and seated herself in the antique chair of which we have already made mention.

A light stroke on the door of the apartment met her ear almost on the instant, and her heart beat high as she replied to the signal, and saw her page glide into the room, followed by a veiled and shrouded figure.

"The daughter of Ben Abdel is here, Madam;" said the boy in a low voice, which increased by its implied necessity for caution, the pulsations of his mistress; "she is on the threshold, and awaits permission to do her errand."

"I will receive her"— was the reply, uttered with less than the usual urbanity of the Lady Rachel; who, like many an older and wiser individual had succeeded in soliloquizing herself into a very uncalled-for spirit of defiance; "why stands the Jewish maiden at the thres-

hold? Have I not said that I would grant her the interview she seeks?"

Thus encouraged, the daughter of Ben Abdel advanced to the table near which the Lady Rachel was seated, and casting off her mantle, she stood before her hostess with a look half haughty and half humble, which well became the gorgeousness of her beauty.

For a brief space neither spoke: the gaze of the high-born heiress of Delawere was rivetted on the bright vision which had burst so suddenly upon her sight, while the eyes of the young Jewess were fastened with a like tenacity upon the fair creature before her. And well might the Lady Rachel look long and lingeringly, for never before had aught so lovely crossed her path; never had beauty asserted itself more proudly, in despite of a garb plain even to fastidiousness. The magnificence of which the page had spoken as a characteristic of Ben Abdel's daughter had been carefully avoided; she was simply attired in a closely-

fitting vest of silk, of a deep rich crimson, while her clear brow was surmounted by a turban of the same material, but of the palest azure; her dress fell in rich folds from her waist, where it was confined by a broad girdle of the same colour as her turban; and being of a fashion less flowing that those of the Christian dames, it revealed a foot and ancle so slender and symmetrical that they might have served as a model for the statuary. Her hair, black and bright as the wing of the raven, was braided smoothly across her brow, and confined beneath her turban, from which it escaped to fall over her shoulders in rich plaits which reached nearly to her knee; her eyes were long, and large, and black as midnight; while her teeth were dazzlingly white, and served by their extreme brilliancy to deepen the coralline hue of her lips, and the clear rich brown of her complexion. Her hands were clasped together, and her slender fingers were compressed slightly, as though her heart beat

quicker in the presence of the Christian lady than she cared to betray; while the fixed glance of her eye, and the tremulous motion of her parted lips, spoke the admiration with which she looked for the first time on the pure pale beauty of which she had heard so much.

"Thou art welcome, maiden—" said the Lady Rachel at length, in a softer tone than she had previously spoken: "even although I incur some peril in complying with thy desire, yet still I tell thee in all truth that thou art welcome—"

"I thank thee for the assurance, lady;" was the reply; "but even more for the accent in which it was uttered—the daughter of Ben Abdel thanks the Christian dame for a gentleness so well beseeming alike her fortunes and her beauty. As the lily is the purest of all blossoms, so should it be the sweetest also—as the moon is the softest of all the heavenly orbs, so should it shine where its light is loveliest—and even thus, where birth, and beauty, and

fortune all unite to bestow a bright and a blessed destiny, is gentleness doubly pleasant to the spirit—it had sufficed me to look upon thee, and to carry away thine image on my heart; but now that I have listened to thee, the echo of thy kind voice will live amid its depths for ever."

"By our Lady of Grace, thy speech smacks of the Court, fair Jewess!" smiled the Lady Rachel: "I know not when I have hearkened to so well-chosen a flattery—but I fear me that we have little time to spend in compliment; and thus, I would ask of thee to hold me excused when I crave a knowledge of the condition on which thou art willing to restore to me for a brief period the jewels now in the keeping of thy father. I need not trouble thee," she added, more hurriedly; "with any allusion to the follies by which they fell into his custody; suffice it that I have pressing need of them, and crave thy kindly offices in their redemption."

"That condition is already half accomplished, lady;" replied Mirian sorrowfully:. "I have looked upon thee—I have lingered over every line of the bright beauty which has clouded mine for ever—I have been held worthy to stand at thy side, to listen to thy soft voice, and to feel the spell of thy sweet smile—the high-born Lady Rachel, and the Jewish Miriam—the heiress of a proud race, and the daughter of Ben Abdel—the forsaken, and the worshipped, have stood face to face—a little while, and I shall depart for the home of my people, and be forgotten—thou, the bright, the beautiful, and the beloved, wilt be first at Festival and Tourney—I, the despised, the degraded, and the desolate, shall be hidden from all eyes in the home of my people—thou, the last of thy race wilt be held in honour—I, the last of mine shall be the mark of scorn—the gorgeous blossom will spread wide its painted petals to the sun-shine, the withered leaf will be trampled by the passing traveller—"

"Thou speakest in riddles, maiden—"

"Shall I read them, Lady? Listen; I will tell thee a tale; and that done, I will but ask to hang an amulet about thy neck, and to place in thine hand the jewels of which thou hast need, ere I depart from thy sight for ever. Thou art willing to yield me this grace, and once more I thank thee; I will seat myself here at thy feet, and tell thee all."

"Nay, not so, maiden;" said the Lady Rachel: "my page has told me much of the splendour of thy bower-chamber, and it were not courteous to suffer thee to place thyself so humbly."

"In this at least I pray thee say me not nay, lady;" persisted the Jewess; and beckoning to the boy, he placed at the feet of his mistress the crimson cushion on which she knelt to her devotions, and then withdrew to the far recess of a deep bay window; while Miriam, seating herself, buried her face in her palms for a moment in silence, and then passing her hand

hastily across her brow, without even glancing towards her companion, commenced her recital.

"When Ben Abdel was yet young, lady, he was the wisest and the handsomest of his tribe; and even among a people who reverence gray hairs to an extent beyond what Christians can understand, and by whom length of years is held in honour, his extraordinary wisdom and his unobtrusive piety early gained for him a consideration and a respect almost incompatible with his youth. As time passed over him his reputation increased, and while there was not a Rabbi who did not do justice to the mental merits of Ben Abdel, so also was there not a maiden among our tribes who did not sigh in secret to possess his heart. But it had been otherwise decreed, lady—no daughter of Israel was fated to call him husband—that he loved, deeply, fervently, devotedly, had been long suspected, for his eye grew heavy, and his step listless; and it was soon whispered among the people that Ben Abdel was unhappy in his

affections; perhaps he might be so for a time, but, gifted as he was, he could not long remain a prey to sorrow—and thus it chanced that at length he brought to the home of his fathers a Christian maiden. I feel thee start, lady: but thou can'st not the more understand the tumult which ensued — nor need I dwell upon so palpable a portion of my tale; pale, and trembling, and timid, came the daughter of the Christians among the people of her husband, only to be shunned, and avoided, and despised; this she could perchance have borne, but her misery ended not here—the ban of her church fell upon her—the father to whose knee she had climbed in her happy infancy, cursed her—and thus she stood at her husband's hearth without a faith, without a kinsman, and without a friend, save him for whose sake she had relinquished all—and well did he repay the sacrifice; he was alike husband, and kinsman, and friend to her—When he poured out his wealth at her feet, she thanked him with her soft eyes; but when

he lavished on her the treasures of his affection, then indeed she repaid him with the devotion of a heart whose love was beyond all price—yet the arrow was in her soul; and she lived only to become a mother, ere the curse was fulfilled——

"I was the child of tears, lady: and as he laid me on my dead mother's bosom, Ben Abdel swore that, for her sake, he would evermore pursue the Christian with his hate—that he would never succour their unfortunate, assist their struggling, nor spare their improvident. As I grew up he sought to convert me to his creed, but he could not; though I reverenced and loved my father, yet could I not forget that my mother was a Christian; and even as a child, I loved thy people, for her memory was bound up in them. Years passed over me thus; and the stern Ben Abdel to me was all gentleness; I heard how he wrung his last coin from the prodigal and the spendthrift, and I beheld myself surrounded by the luxury of far lands

purchased at a price so mighty that I often marvelled at his profusion; I saw others bow their heads at his bidding, and I felt that my will, capricious as it often was, was nevertheless his law. On one point only was Ben Abdel firm; I have wept, I have even knelt to him to spare some needy wretch who has come to him for aid, only to find himself tenfold more fettered by his usurious exactions; here I was powerless; though he did not spurn me from him, he would stoop, and smite gently upon my cheek, as he told me with a cold smile to spare my pleadings for one of the suffering faith, nor lavish thus my pity on a Christian. Yet think not, lady, that my heart bled the less! Would that I had hearkened to the voice of Ben Abdel, but his words passed by me, and were forgotten, as the idle wind sweeps over the forest leaves, and then leaves them parching in the hot sunshine.

"One came at length, whose errand was the same as that of those who had preceded

him; he needed gold. He boasted a proud name, lady, and as there were broad lands annexed to it, such a suitor could not depart unsatisfied; but Ben Abdel was wary, and there were parchments to examine, and difficulties to discuss, which brought the noble often to the dwelling of the money-lender. More than once had I looked on him; more than once had I drank in the music of his voice, alike unseen and unthought of; often had my heart sickened as I whispered to myself, 'but once again perchance, Miriam, wilt thou gaze upon this proud-browed Christian, nor will he ever know that the Jewish Ben Abdel, the exacting money-lender, the usurious Israelite, had a daughter!'—Tears have followed the conviction, lady, many and bitter tears, such as those only can shed who have been born to contempt and neglect; and well had it been for me had I wept none other; but this was not to be. On a summer eve—it was the anniversary of that on which my father had brought home

his Christian bride, and which was ever observed in our family with more magnificence than any other festival—I sat alone in my apartment, (for Ben Abdel had been summoned to the bed-side of a dying friend,) when the stealthy signal which ever implied a Christian visitor, brought the blood to my cheek in volumes; I did not pause to reflect—I sprang from my low seat—I stole one hurried glance to ascertain that it was indeed himself—and then I simply signified my willingness to receive the stranger until the return of my father, and in an instant he stood before me.—

"My first thought was of myself, lady: I was conscious that neither care nor cost had been spared upon my appearance; I had diamonds upon my brow and upon my bosom, and my turban was of the richest produce of the Indian loom; my sandals were looped with jewels, and my arms were encircled by them—in a word, I met the eye of the stranger clad in sufficient wealth to swallow up his barony, and with a consciousness of my advantage

which added tenfold to its power. Lady, I am laying bare for thy sake, the weakness which I have concealed from every other eye—I am teaching thee to despise me, but I heed it not, for the lesson, should'st thou hold it to thy heart, will avail thee much. Can'st thou not imagine what ensued? The Christian passed from the gloomy twilight of the public streets to an apartment bright with many lamps, fed by oils so delicately perfumed that the atmosphere breathed only of roses—he had been jostled on his path by the squalid and the busy, and he now stood alone beside the languid daughter of luxury, striving in vain to make a business of her idleness—he had shrunk from the harsh accents of the insolent, and the loose ribaldry of the dissolute, and he was greeted by the low soft accents of a welcome such a woman only knows how to give. Need I then tell thee, that ere the two hours of Ben Abdel's protracted absence had expired, the courtly Christian fancied that he loved? while the too credu-

lous victim of his sophistry had woven for him an offering of the fairest flowers, and bound them together with a golden chain from her own bosom.

"Why did I not die at the close of those two brief hours!" continued the Jewess more energetically, as she wrung her small hands in a momentary paroxysm of anguish; "but what avail regrets: suffering is the badge of all my race, and I must fulfil my destiny! How I loved that Christian noble—how I still love him—aye, love him, though my scorn outmeasures my passion, and bows it to submission! My tale is almost told—again and again he came—in silence and in secret; my father knew not that one who loved his daughter was beneath his roof, or the curse which had fallen upon her mother had been perpetuated in her. He trusted her with all his wealth, he bade her use it unsparingly, and she obeyed him.

"Ere long the gold which had been supplied to the Christian noble was all repaid to Ben Abdel; nor guessed he, as he poured out

this new treasure in the lap of his daughter, that it did but return to the coffers whence it had so recently been drawn.

"Yet it was so in sooth, lady; and then the visits of the smooth-tongued suitor grew less frequent, and his vows less fond. I strove to shut my eyes to a fact which withered me, but I strove in vain: I looked into my own heart, and felt that it would soon be a waste. That time came at length; the Christian was once more beside me—he clasped me to his bosom, he bewailed his own evil destiny, he even wept; but I shed no tear, lady; I did not ask what was to follow—there was no need; *he* reminded me of the brand which was upon my brow—He, for whom I had risked a father's curse, even while he held me to his heart, drove the iron into mine! He was a Christian noble; a knight of name and lineage—a free man in a free land—and I—what availed it that I was the child of a Christian mother? I was yet a Jewess—one of the despised—and he could not pollute

his pure blood by such an unholy tie:—True, Ben Abdel had risked all for her sake who loved him, but Ben Abdel was not a Christian! True, my father had clung to his young bride through contumely, and abandonment,—amid reproach and neglect; beneath a threatening and a curse; but my father was a Jew, and no meet model for a Christian Baron—the truth lay bare before me; in my blindness, I had believed that, even as Ben Abdel had braved all for my dead mother, so would the lover of my youth defy the bigot rules of his own creed for me; but now I knew that I had been deceived. Nor was this all—for, bitter as it was, methinks I could have borne even this, and pardoned him—but then, aye *then*—when my brain was burning, and my pulses throbbed almost to bursting—he chose that moment to tell me that he loved another—madly loved her! One upon whom the seal of contumely was not set—one whom the world held in honour—even *thyself*, lady—am I not calm when I tell thee this? doth my cheek flush

or my voice tremble? I have been tutored in anguish, and I have been no sorry pupil. In my inmost heart I vowed that I would look upon thee — that I would see the proud pale beauty before which mine had been powerless; and I have kept my vow. Even then, as we stood side by side, the deceiver and the deceived, I whispered to my spirit that it should be thus— and behold, I have redeemed the pledge. This was the secret which he had sought me to reveal; but when the truth was told, and that the man who had lifted the cup of misery to my young lips, and held it there until I had drained it even to the dregs—when he went on to whisper that a lucky turn of fortune had enabled him to bring with him the gold which I had lavished on his necessities, and that he could repay me even to the uttermost farthing, then indeed I clothed my scorn in words, and bade him leave me; yet still he lingered, and murmured I know not what of remorse, and misery, and beseeching; but I listened no

longer: I had read his heart, and felt that the page on which my eye had rested was a polluted one. Thus did we part—without a tear, without a clasping of the hands, or a blessing of the lips—nor thinks he that we have since met; but he deceives himself—and we shall yet meet again—meanwhile, be warned, lady: the serpent is upon your own path; and he who made a sport of the feelings of the confiding Miriam, can be no meet mate for the soft-eyed daughter of Delawere—"

"What mean you, maiden?" asked the Lady Rachel, as the excited Jewess rose, and stood before her: "of whom would you warn me?"

"Lady:" was the emphatic reply; "time wears, and I must hence: remember my parting words—when the thunder-cloud shall hover above the lily, the hidden lightning shall strike down the eagle: let not therefore the weak blossom pine for the shelter of its wings, for the flower shall live out its hour, but the bird

of prey shall be smitten in its strongest flight—" She paused a moment, and then resumed more hurriedly; "now to fulfil my compact," and drawing a sealed casket from amid the folds of the heavy mantle which she had cast aside, she placed it in the hands of the astonished Lady Rachel, while she withdrew from beneath her vest a costly rosary of rubies with a cross of brilliants: "This;" she said, as she pressed it to her lips; "was intended as an offering to my mother who never forsook her faith, on the birth of her child—I have told you her history; she lived not to receive the gift, nor has Ben Abdel since brooked to look upon it—lady, I would ask of thee to wear it for my sake, in memory of a meeting which can never occur again—think not of the casket in thy hand further than to remember that it hath been ransomed by thine own gentleness to the spirit-broken Jewess; and be the pressure of my lips upon thy slender fingers the seal of thine ac-

quittance—and now, farewell—may all good angels guard thee!"

For a moment the hand of the Lady Rachel was clasped between those of her excited companion, and she was conscious that the rosary had been flung about her neck; in the next, the page had obeyed the gesture of the departing Jewess, and, having assisted to shroud her once more in her heavy mantle, had followed her from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

The Lady Rachel remained for a while overpowered by astonishment; nor did she make an effort to recal her mysterious visitor; but when the recollection grew upon her that she had probably seen the Jewess for the first and last time, she became conscious that while the interview had relieved her from an actual difficulty, it had bequeathed to her a mental one of no ordinary magnitude. To which of her numerous suitors could the daughter of Ben

Abdel allude? whom was she taught to despise, and cautioned to avoid? For an instant her thoughts wandered to De Clancy, but she spurned the suspicion at once, as unworthy alike of him and of herself.

"Why did she not tell me all?" she murmured: "or wherefore tell me aught? I am now like a blind wretch, conscious of a yawning precipice, and unable to secure myself from destruction. But what avails it to bewilder myself with conjectures? it *cannot* be De Clancy, for he is the very soul of honour, and guiltless alike of improvidence and deceit: and for my other suitors—truly though they were to pawn their wits, and whisper love-vows to every Jewess in London, it would concern me little, and affect me less. And yet surely it is something to be loved by one who had looked on her! How tame doth the beauty of the fair-haired Rachel Delawere shew beside the rich, voluptuous loveliness of the Jew's daughter—I never beheld such eyes! now flashing passion,

now melting into softness—and that proud brow, and scornful lip! I would give half mine heritage to catch the haughty gesture that I might use it at my need—By St. Catherine, he can be but a cold-hearted craven who played that maiden false, or he lacks eyes, all Jewess as she is—loves *me!* he but wastes his time for I should have no faith in his passion, and no deference for his taste. Marry, 'tis a strange world, where a man can use his heart thus, like a tennis-ball; but I will accept no devotion in the rebound—and therefore, fair Jewess, there is no fear that I shall ever call thy recreant lover, lord." And having satisfied herself that the only individual who occupied her thoughts could not be the recreant suitor of the Jewess, the Lady Rachel dismissed the subject from her mind, and busied herself in examining the contents of the casket which had been so strangely restored to her, and in admiring the magnificent rosary by which they had been accompanied.

The third day of September at length ar-

rived, and not a patrician residence throughout the metropolis but prepared to pour forth its fair and noble inmates to do honour to the coronation of Richard the Lion-hearted. A sumptuous gallery had been prepared in the Abbey of Westminster for the accommodation of the Queen-mother, lined and overlaid with crimson velvet, richly laced and fringed with gold; and, amid a groupe of the loveliest ladies in the land, who were clustered behind her chair, stood the rival beauties of the Court, the Lady Rachel Delawere, and her friend and cousin, the Lady lice Leicester, clad in the same robes, yet differing as much in their respective styles as in their several characters. The high favour which the gallant Lord Pembroke enjoyed with Eleanor the Queen-mother, had ensured to his ward an honourable station about her person, while the persecution which Robert Earl of Leicester had suffered at the hands of her husband, had created a sympathy of misfortune with the lately attainted noble,

which was sufficient in itself to awaken in her bosom an interest for his young and lovely daughter, whose heart, as it was whispered, had long been bestowed (however hopelessly) on the King's brother, John, Earl of Montaigne.

Under these circumstances, it may well be believed that no two hearts beat higher during the august ceremonial than those of the fair cousins, who stood side by side, leaning on the chair of their royal mistress; as, each bearing an honourable share in the pageant, their respective knights passed before them in all the glittering magnificence called forth by the occasion; while it was remarked that as Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, placed the crown upon the head of the monarch, the mother triumphed for a moment over the queen; and Eleanor, remembering that the son who had restored her so lately alike to liberty and to honour, was about to depart for the Holy Land,

perchance never to return, burst into tears, and buried her face in her spread hands.

It were needless to dilate on the ceremonial of the coronation, as it remains the same in spirit, and almost in detail, even to our own times; suffice it therefore that the monarch and his train passed from the Abbey into the stately Hall of Westminster to partake of the regal banquet; Richard having previously divested himself of the rich and heavy apparel which he had worn during his coronation, and assumed a more light and convenient dress.

When the Monarch entered the Hall at the head of his Court, a murmur of admiration arose among the crowd who had penetrated by dint of bribes, perseverance, and the King's previously implied permission, even beyond the threshold, nor did the sovereign appear insensible to the effect produced by his appearance. In the very prime of life, at the summit of worldly honour, high in favour alike with the Pope and with the people, conscious that he had already

repaired much of the injustice perpetrated by his father, and not altogether unmindful of his natural endowments, Richard moved forward, bending gracefully to the right and left, and carrying in his hand a velvet cap looped with diamonds, whose rich plumage swept the floor; while his head was encircled by a slight coronal of gold, from which his long hair fell in curls upon his shoulders. A smile sat upon his lip, whose slender moustache gave a warlike character to his countenance, and accorded well with the stern haughtiness of a brow unfurrowed by a single line.

Immediately behind the king, who had the Queen-mother on his left hand, walked the Bishops of Canterbury, Roan, Trier, and Dublin, followed by the Earls of Mortaigne, Pembroke, Salisbury, and Leicester. Then came three other Earls; David, brother to the King of Scots, the Earl of Huntingdon, and William Mandevill, Earl of Albemarle; and to these again succeeded Hugh, Bishop of Durham, and

Reignold, Bishop of Bath, and a numerous train of barons, bannerets, and knights, followed in their turn by divers court servitors, and the maidens of the many dames of rank who were in the train of the young monarch.

The several ceremonies had terminated, and Richard the Lion-hearted sat at the head of a costly banquet. "Whereat," as the old historian quaintly tells us, "wanted no store of meats and drinks, which were served out in most princelie and bountifull wise," when a sudden clamour arose at the entrance of the Hall. which ere the lapse of a moment, deepened into an outcry so unmeasured as to attract the notice of the monarch.

A violent demand for admittance—a refusal yet more unseemly—a struggle—a yell of defiance—and a blow from the sheathed weapon of Sir Reginald De Tracy who kept the door, followed by a heavy fall—succeeded each other so instantaneously that Richard had no time to make enquiries, nor to stay the progress of the

disorder. Another moment, and the tumult had encreased tenfold, when the King drawing his sword, rose and would have approached the scene of strife, but was withheld by the Bishops; while his nobles closed around him, each with his weapon in his hand, and barred his passage. Meanwhile the cry of treason resounded from every lip, and while the trembling women clustered about the Queen-mother, the tumult continued unabated and unexplained.

At the first alarm, the Lady Rachel with the true instinct of affection had sprung to the side of De Clancy, to whose arm she clung as though there alone she could find protection; while a partial cessation of the mysterious warfare was succeeded by the sudden apparition of a veiled female, who springing past the combatants, rushed forward and flung herself at the feet of the Lady Rachel.

"Save us!" she exclaimed as she wildly clasped her knees; "as thou art a woman and a daughter, save us! *He* is smitten—my father

—my last parent—unarmed he came, bearing rich gifts in all peace and loyalty, and he is smitten even unto the death—yet a short while perchance, and Ben Abdel will sleep beside his Christian bride!"

"Miriam!" murmured the lady as she bent down, and strove to raise the Jewess from the earth! "Miriam! what would'st thou of *me?*"

"Justice!" exclaimed the daughter of Ben Abdel, suddenly springing up, and casting aside her veil; "Justice!—Richard will hearken to *thee*—he hath a mother—she will hearken to thee, for she hath a son—Jew or Christian, the tie is equal—speak for us—supplicate for us—the blood-hounds are unleashed—it is the struggle of the few against the many—the weak against the strong—And thou too, Baron De Clancy," she continued, as she raised her eyes proudly to those of the young noble, who was gazing upon her with an earnestness which seemed rather the effect of some fascination over which he had no controul, than a desire

to look upon her beauty; "Thou, too, can'st speak for us, and stay the slaughter which has commenced—When thou wert poor, did we not assist thee? When thou wert sad, did we not cherish thee? And when thou wert false, did we not pardon thee? Art thou yet silent? Then may the curse which was poured out upon my Christian mother be revived for thee!—I have loved thee, De Clancy, but mark me now—should Ben Abdel be sacrificed, I will pursue thee with my hate--visit thee with my vengeance—and live only to thy despite."

"Will no one rid me of this maniac?" almost shrieked De Clancy, as the Lady Rachel shrank from beside him; but ere the words had left his lips, the Jewess had again forced her way across the threshold, and a wild, shrill, exulting peal of laughter rang out clear and distinct above the uproar which yet desecrated the royal presence, and told that she had effected her escape.

But her presence had solved an enigma,

and cast a shade over the brow of the monarch, which the extreme loveliness of the agonized Jewess had only tended to deepen.

"I fear me that we are ourselves to blame in this passage, Holy Sirs;" he said hurriedly, as he turned towards the Bishops; "remember you not that the Jews would fain have approached us with gifts on the occasion of our coronation, and that we forbade them our presence alike at mass and at banquet? And see you not that they have once more striven to work out their purpose, and thus drawn down the vengeance of our guards? This must not be, Good Sirs, for although we have deemed it expedient, in conformity with your counsels, to guard our person against the sorceries of an accursed race; yet would we not unjustly and despitefully cut off from among our subjects a people who have freely offered us tribute—Let this be looked to, my lords; we will have no more shedding of blood—address ye therefore to quell this tumult, and to appease the vio-

lence of the populace on pain of our displeasure."

"Doth not Your Highness see the finger of God in this?" asked the Archbishop of Trier; "is it not meet that, on the crowning of a Christian King, the obstinate forwardness of the Jewish people should be rebuked? It is a token of good to the church, and one which Your Highness is pledged to fulfil hereafter."

"We will not fail in our duty to the Faith, Holy Sir," replied Richard turning away; "as let our deeds from this day forth bear us witness—but not the less do we command that this slaughter, which hath grown out of a weakness unworthy of our better nature, be forthwith stayed; and we shall hold each disloyal who puts not his hand to the good work."

"De Clancy—" said the Lady Rachel in a stern whisper; "Richard hath spoken, and thou still standest in thy place—Did she not love thee? and wilt thou leave her to be butchered by her enemies? Shame on thee! where

is thy manhood, that thou standest thus like a thing of stone, while the yells of an excited multitude, each one a murderer, are ringing in thine ears? De Clancy, redeem thyself—thou art yet a foul traitor—haste thee to wipe away the stain—remember that she has loved thee, and that, Jewess though she be, she is yet a woman."

De Clancy had indeed hitherto, as the Lady Rachel expressed it, stood like a thing of stone, even while the nobles were hurriedly preparing to obey the commands of the monarch; but as her voice fell on his ear, he struck his clenched hand violently on his forehead, turned one long look upon her, and plunged into the thickest of the throng.

CHAPTER VII.

Never, perhaps, was there a more perfect example afforded than by the weakness into which the King had been deluded by the bigotted and superstitous counsels of his Bishops, of the facility with which the evil passions of a multitude may be excited; and of the difficulty which attends the subsequent allaying of those passions. When Richard declared before his Court that the Jews should not be permitted to come into his presence, under whatever pretext, on the day of his coronation,

he stopped not to consider the probable, or at least, possible effects of such a resolution, thus unequivocally and openly expressed. He forgot, or overlooked the fact of the ecclesiastic intolerance, which had already humbled that persecuted people even to the dust; and which, with a spirit of extortion equal to their own, had hampered them with vexatious taxes, to a degree which called for some relief even from a Catholic monarch, who professed to commence his reign on the broad basis of liberality and justice.

That the Jewish people looked forward with such a hope, was made apparent by the circumstance of their declaring their intention to do all possible honour to his coronation, by appearing there with every species of magnificence, to present to him some costly gift, expressive of their joy at his accession, and in all humility to crave his royal countenance and favour, and the confirmation of those grants and charters which had been ceded to them by

former sovereigns. It was the knowledge of this intention, and the desire to prevent such an act of the royal clemency towards the Jews, which induced the Prelates, who were about the person of the King, to poison his mind by dark hints of sorcery and treason; until Richard, who had long lived in voluntary thraldom to the priests, and whose heart was so set on the projected crusade as to make him morbidly sensitive to every incident, which might by any possibility prove a bar to his favourite project, yielded with even more than a woman's weakness to the terrors which such a prospect presented, and refused definitely either to accept the gift, or to admit the donors.

Maddened alike by the insult, and by the certainty which it implied of increased extortion and outrage, the Jews resolved to make a last effort to plead their own cause before the young monarch; and, justly considering that their appearance in the Abbey, during the solemnization of a high religious ceremonial, might

exasperate the minds of the priests yet farther against them, they determined on claiming admittance to the Hall during the banquet, an indulgence which had been unhesitatingly granted to others of Richard's subjects.

The result of the attempt has been already shewn; but there are a few circumstances connected with it which yet remain to be explained.

The principal entrance to the Hall was guarded by a body of knights, all of whom were pledged to accompany Richard to the Holy Land, and who were consequently appointed to many offices of trust about his person.

Among these was Sir Reginald De Tracy, towards whom, for some reason which was unexplained, the priesthood had, even from the commencement of his career, exhibited extraordinary indulgence.

Of a saturnine temperament and unconciliating habits, De Tracy was a bigot in the worst sense of the word; uncharitable, intolerant, and overbearing, possessing great animal daring,

but deficient in moral courage—hating fiercely —revenging fearfully—thankless for benefits, and unforgiving; even as there are ocean-depths which no plummet can fathom, so there were intricacies in the spirit of De Tracy which none could unravel; and, while success appeared to attend all his undertakings, no sympathy hallowed his good fortune, for although he had numerous associates, he had no friend.

Such was the man who reared in ignorance of the identity of his parents, left the religious house in which he had been educated to find himself appointed guardian to a fair child whom he was taught to believe was in reality his sister; though he was instructed, on pain of forfeiting the liberal supply which enabled him to plunge into a career of libertine excess, to impress her infant mind with the belief that he was her parent. Nor was the task so difficult, nor the scheme so extravagant as it may at first sight appear to have been; for on his departure from the Dominican Monastery in which

he had passed his boyhood, the mysterious controuler of his actions caused him to be removed to a distant part of the kingdom, where the arrival of a young widower with an infant daughter, while it excited some curiosity, created no surprize. The natural temperament of De Tracy assisted the deceit, and his paroxysms of gloomy abstraction and his unsocial habits were looked upon as the simple consequences of a severe and recent bereavement.

For the first few months, the sullen youth cursed the conditions on which he held his impunity from want. The helpless child fettered his actions, controlled his inclinations, and forced upon him a necessity of outward decorum which he could ill tolerate, but he knew not to whom to appeal for relief from his singular and irksome guardianship; after a time, however, his heart softened towards the lovely and loving innocent who clung to him with an affection which would not be shaken off: and even as the most flinty rock hath its spring of gushing water, so had

the spirit of De Tracy one better feeling which taught him to protect and cherish the fair child; and although no word of tenderness ever escaped his lips when she played at his knee, or lisped her loving accents to attract his notice, yet did he not the less exult in the surpassing beauty which from day to day expanded beneath his eye, until he became jealous of every other gaze which rested on it. On a spirit like that of De Tracy, there could not have existed a stronger tie than this to link him to the fair girl; had affection only been required of him, he must have failed, for he was incapable of affection. His was the passionate and jealous guardianship of the savage animal; a feeling compounded of instinct, habit, and conscious power—an impulse rather than a principle; and when, as the child grew into womanhood, bright, and beautiful, and innocent, he looked into his own heart, and remembered that she was as a drop of dew upon the nightshade, a pure and precious thing reposing all unwittingly where all else was poison

—when he saw her smiling on him, unconscious of the pollution to which she clung; he vowed to his own heart that she, at least, should be preserved from the ruin which he had voluntarily drawn down upon himself.

Under so stern a tutor it will be readily conceived that as the child advanced in years, her playful spirit became gradually saddened, and her love more than counterbalanced by her fear; nor was De Tracy unconscious of the change; but while he murmured within himself at the off-falling of her affection, he made no effort to revive it, and only resolved the more that the tenderness which he had failed to secure should never be bestowed upon another.

Amid all his excesses, depraved as he was in mind, and vicious as he was in habit, De Tracy was yet too deeply imbued with the superstitions of his early education to be enabled to divest himself of the conventual gloom and bigotry to which he had been so long enured;

and with the narrow and mistaken policy of his sect and times, while he forbore to correct in himself one evil propensity, or to forego one iniquitous indulgence, he resolved to offer up the pure and gentle girl as a propitiatory sacrifice for his own sins. Such a resolution necessarily entailed upon his victim an existence of seclusion, endurance, and suffering. By nature confiding, affectionate, and joyous, her feelings, although smothered, were not extinct, and she shrank with horror from the prospect of a cloister; but her tears, her entreaties, her despair were vain; and, when at length she flung herself at the feet of De Tracy, and clasped his knees, as she implored him to revoke his sentence, he did but spurn her as she knelt, and warn her not to trespass further on his humour.

The bewildered girl looked wildly around her, as he strode from the room, but there was no escape—she had no other home, no other friend—and yet—a sudden light danced in her

eye—a sudden crimson mantled on her cheek—she had—she had a friend! One who had already taught her that she was at least dear to one heart, though she had hitherto shrunk with pious horror from his suit.

But now, when she was menaced with a living death—when she was called upon to devote her every thought, her every hope, to the service of a religion which was associated in her mind only with images of gloom and terror—now, when she was standing on the brink of misery, she recurred in thought to that secret and long-subdued devotion. There was no other prospect of deliverance — no other chance of happiness—and while yet kneeling on the earth where De Tracy had quitted her, she vowed never to abandon the faith of her fathers, wretched as to her had been its fruits; while she prayed with all the agony of a young pure spirit, trembling on the threshold of its first transgression, for pardon of a fault into whose commission she was driven by terror and despair.

On the morrow she was missing—there was no clue, no trace by which she might be tracked to her hiding-place; and the menials of De Tracy shrank away trembling from the fearful paroxysms of his wrath. In his rage he revealed her flight to the community of which she was so soon to have become a member—to the priest who had upheld him in the hope that in the piety of his victim his own sins would be blotted out—to all whom curiosity had collected around his threshold—and it was during this interval of passion that the damning news reached him that the timid victim of his selfishness, the gentle, pious, obedient girl whom he had reared from infancy to womanhood, had fled with an Israelite, and become the wife of the Jewish Ben Abdel!

For a time De Tracy was crushed by the intelligence—shame—disappointment—and the thirst of vengeance shook him to the centre of his spirit, but the last feeling soon prevailed—he called down upon the devoted head of the

fugitive the ban of the church; and to that curse, sufficient of itself to wither one who had been reared in its gloomiest and most repulsive tenets, he mercilessly linked his own.

The effect of this combined denunciation on its victim, as well as on her Jewish husband, we have already seen; and thus, when we inform the reader that Ben Abdel was the leader of the Israelitish body who strove to force a passage to the royal presence in the Banquetting Hall at Westminster on the occasion of Richard's coronation, it will not be difficult to understand how eagerly De Tracy converted the weak resolution of the monarch into an opportunity of vengeance upon his enemy.

But the triumph of De Tracy ended not here. It was easy for Richard, as he stood among his nobles, to command that the violence which he had himself indirectly drawn down upon an unoffending people should cease; it was equally easy for his courtiers to promise obedience; but the multitude is a hydra-headed

monster ever greedy of outrage, and, once aroused from its lethargy, difficult to lay at rest.

The blow given by De Tracy was instantly returned by Ben Abdel with an energy and a hate equal to his own; and the excited mob who thronged the entrance of the Hall, and who had with difficulty been kept back by the knights, caught eagerly at the signal, and seconded the hatred of De Tracy by an out-break of violence which was alike causeless and beyond control.

Shouts of "Treason!" "Sorcery!" "The Jews! The Jews!" resounded on all sides; while the clashing of weapons, the heavy blows of the clubs with which many of the common people were armed, the shrieks of women, and the curses of men, proved how ineffectual were the commands of the monarch to suppress a tumult which awoke in the breasts of the people a thousand cherished prejudices, and hoarded hatreds, and bigotted superstitions. As the crowd, still pursuing their devoted victims with staves and bats, and hurling after them

huge stones and every species of missile rolled away from the palace gates, a rumour ran through the ctiy that Richard had commanded the total extirpation of the Jews; while as fresh numbers were every instant swelling the ranks of the multitude, the work of slaughter progressed with frightful rapidity; and ere long not an individual of the hunted race, save the dead or the dying, was to be seen in the streets of the city.

But the cry for blood was abroad, and the work of death was only half accomplished—a momentary pause ensued—a frightful lull, like the hush of nature while the storm-cloud collects its thunders—and then again a maddening yell burst forth, which was answered by a rush of flame. The most furious of the populace had gained that quarter of the city in which resided a great majority of the Jews, and heedless that they were condemning to probable destruction the persons and property of many of their own faith, they had fired the dwellings of several of the Jewish leaders. As the ad-

vancing flames met and mingled, the conflagration became terrible to contemplate, and the most reckless of the multitude paused in terror at the work of their own hands. Yet it was but a temporary feeling of compunction by which they were actuated during that brief moment, for, as the appetite for destruction grew with its indulgence, so the excited and desperate mob again rushed forward to complete their hellish work.

Meanwhile intelligence had been conveyed to Richard of the frightful extent to which this unlooked-for outrage had already progressed; and yielding with great reluctance to the reasonings of his Bishops, he at length consented to refrain from exposing his person in so wild and lawless a tumult, and dispatched Ranulfe De Granville the Lord Chief Justice, accompanied by the proper officers, to disperse the rioters; but ere they reached the Jew's quarter, the evil was at its height, and they were received with insults, taunts, and even blows;

while their threats were resented with violence, and their arguments treated with derision.

As evening closed over the city, the scene became tenfold more fearful; burning houses, shrieking victims, the yells of the rioters, and the groans of the smitten, all blended in one frightful mass of suffering; while those whose cupidity outweighed their cruelty, pillaged the tottering and smouldering ruins at the very risk of their lives, and left to their still more barbarous comrades the privilege of massacreing every unhappy victim who strove to escape from the flames, only to meet as cruel a death on the points of the rude weapons of their assailants.

Thus passed the night—a night of flame, and fear, and blood; and not, as the historian of that period informs us, until the second hour from noon on the morrow did the multitude grow weary in the work of murder; and then they withdrew from the scene of slaughter slowly and reluctantly, as the gorged savage quits his meal, surfeited with gore, and yet loth to resign the garbage.

CHAPTER VIII.

From the great mass of suffering which we have endeavoured to describe in the last chapter, our story demands that we should select one groupe and one locality. In a subterranean chamber, scantily furnished, and lighted only by a dim lamp—on a heap of costly shawls which had evidently been flung down in the emergency of the moment, lay a man in the prime of life, wounded and bleeding; his cheeks were ashy white, his dark eyes dim and

glassy, and the long beard which fell below his girdle, clotted with blood; the spasm which at intervals convulsed his features, and contracted his limbs, only rendered the resolute silence from complaint which he maintained, the more heroic and beautiful; while his lofty stature, athletic form, and fine proportions, told a tale of recent strength and power painfully contrasted by his present prostration and helplessness. Seated on the floor, with his head upon her knees, was a female, whose dishevelled hair fell in dark clouds about her, while portions of her dress and her clasped hands were crimson with that fearful stain from which woman shrinks in her hour of happiness. In few paces apart stood an aged menial, with her arms folded on her breast, and her eyes intently rivetted on the groupe before her. Strown about the vault, were rich garments, and a variety of those costly ornaments in which beauty loves to deck herself; but now they were evidently disregarded and forgotten; while the eye of the younger

female wandered anxiously from the pale lips of the sufferer to a cruise of water which stood beside her.

Suddenly the deep silence of the subterranean was interrupted by the heavy fall of some burning building, followed by the shrill exulting shout of a multitude; a shout so wild and loud as to penetrate even to the ear of the dying man.

"God of our Fathers! stay thine anger:" he murmured, as the cry subsided; "let not our race be utterly swept from the land—God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, quench the flame of thy consuming wrath, and spare the remnant of thy people!"

"Dost thou thirst, my father?" whispered a soft voice.

"I thirst for death, Miriam; for death, my own loved and lovely one—for an abiding-place where the blow and the brand of the Christian cannot come; and where the withered heart casts off the curse which hath blighted it—My

child—" he continued, raising himself with difficulty to his elbow, while the exertion rallied back the blood for a while to his cheek; "My child, I have been called an usurer—an extortioner—a man of stolid eye and marble heart:—That I have flung back the hatred, and repaid the contumely of the Christian, I deny not—even here, upon my death-bed, I would not have it otherwise—I would not redeem myself with the butchers who have murdered our aged, and our little ones, our feeble women, and our trembling sick—who have burned our dwellings—and added the mean sin of theft to the fierce crime of murder—I would not even now bestow the meanest portion of my wealth to be esteemed by their proudest, and set in their high places. And yet, for thy sake, my child, I would do much; it is the thought of thee which makes death bitter. Thy name was upon my lips when I struck down the fiend who had lifted his coward hand against a woman—it was thine image which nerved my unarmed strength, and

made me mighty in the cause of innocence. But when I am gone, who will protect thee? my jealous love hath turned from thee the hearts of the young men of our tribe; so that even although some be yet spared, there is not one on whom thou can'st lean when my arm is withdrawn—"

"Heaven will protect me—" murmured the fair girl.

"Miriam," pursued her father; "my sand is almost run; and loving thee as I have loved thee from thine infancy, can'st thou think that I look forward to our parting without a pang? who will be to thee what I have been? And yet—come closer, Miriam; there should be no secrets in the grave, save those which are its own—come closer; and tell me, Miriam—hast thou not done even as thy father did? hast thou not turned the smile of thy young heart upon one of the people of the Gentiles, and closed the volume of thine affections against the strong ones of Israel?"

There was a pause: the head of the shrinking girl was bowed down, and her pale face was hidden beneath the dark hair which fell over it:

"I am answered—" said Ben Abdel: "woe be to us for our sins! Our dwellings are the spoil of the mighty ones—and our Sanctuary is trodden into dust—Even as thou, oh! Jerusalem, wert brought low for thy transgressions, so are thy people scattered, and spoiled, and hunted over the face of the earth. Our strong men are smitten, and our maidens are even as the daughters of Sion—they are clothed with bitterness, and their drink is tears; their beauty is unto them as a curse, for it is become the prey of the spoiler—our dead must bury their dead, —our glory hath departed from us!"

"My father—my dear father—"

"I chide thee not, Miriam; I know not how to chide thee; look up, my child, and tell me only that this Christian loves thee in all honour, and I shall die in peace: he will seek thee out,

and cherish thee; and for thy sake despise the terrors of his church; I tell thee this in all faith, my Miriam, for even thus did I for thy dead mother, because I loved her."

"Alas! my father—"

"How say'st thou!" exclaimed Ben Abdel, as he laid his hand upon her arm: "how sayest thou, my daughter? did he not visit thee? did he not receive gifts at thy hands, and vows from thy lips? did he not swear that thou wert dearer to him than all the maidens of the Gentiles?"

"Father!" said Miriam, as she rose and stood before him, sweeping back the long hair from her forehead, and raising her eyes steadily to his: "the God of our Fathers hath visited in wrath the disobedience of a rash and froward heart. Even as thou sayest, so hath it been: in secret did I receive the Christian, and in secret did I return his vows; and when I should have poured forth my whole spirit at thy feet, I shrank back rebuked, for I remembered that I had dared to love one on whom

thy curse rested. With the smiles which thou valued'st, did I greet him—with the gold which thou gavest did I enrich him—with the affection which thou prized'st did I cling to him; and in my very sin have I found my punishment. Fear me not now—no Christian will again hold the daughter of Ben Abdel to his bosom—the mirth of my heart is gone; once it was proud and froward, now it is waste and desolate—I have hung my harp upon the willows, and by the waters of Babylon have I sat down and wept! My spirit is shaken even to its centre; and of the vanity which once filled its high places, not one fragment is left upon another.—Think not of me, my father; I have turned again unto my people, and my faith — I cannot sing the song of the Lord in a strange land."

"Miriam—my child—" said the dying man: "behold, of that which was late thy home, nothing now remains save a heap of smoking ashes. Of he who was once Ben Abdel, the strong and the mighty, what is left? Where then

can'st thou dwell, daughter of Jerusalem? where can'st thou make an abiding-place? and on whose bosom wilt thou pour out thy griefs when thou art desolate?"

"Fear me not—" repeated the maiden emphatically; "in my days of happiness I shrank from suffering with a feverish dread; but now, when I am compassed round by misery—when I look into mine own heart and find all void—when the chaplet is cast from my brow, and the flowers are withered in mine hand — now I despise its power. All evils save one I can repay with scorn; and for that one"—and as she spoke she drew from her girdle a poignard which had been hidden among its folds: "I can secure myself. Fear not then for me, my father; the daughter of Ben Abdel will never outlive dishonour."

A quick and heavy tread in the ruin above their heads arrested the reply of the dying man; and for a moment they held their breath in that sad hiding-place, to learn if they had

indeed been tracked to their last refuge. The suspense was maddening, but it endured not long; for the sudden fall of a portion of the smouldering dwelling into the vault assured them that its entrance had been discovered; while the echo of footsteps upon the stone stair which led downward from the apartment above, destroyed their last hope of safety.

As the conviction of discovery flashed upon him, Ben Abdel, forgetful of his helplessness, strove to grasp a weapon which lay near him, and to rise from his low pallet; but the effort was a vain one, and he sank back with a despairing groan.

Meanwhile Miriam had sprung forward, and placed herself between her father and the intruders; while the aged woman who had hitherto stood silent and motionless, roused by a sense of coming danger to the exertion of her better powers, placed herself beside the fair girl, and thus assisted to conceal her expiring master. Ere long the descending strangers

were partially visible to the tenants of the subterranean, though from the scanty light of the untrimmed lamp, they were themselves unable for some minutes to distinguish anything; and during those minutes Miriam was made painfully conscious that the invaders of her sanctuary were ruffians of the worst class; some half dozen of those degraded wretches, who like the jackall which gloats over the remnants of the lion's meal, ever follow in the track of the more bold and daring, and secure the game which has been struck by nobler hands.

The disordered appearance of the miscreants, their scorched and reeking apparel, the heavy clubs which they bore in their hands, and the fearful oaths which they vented on the partial darkness that cheated them of their prey on the first moment of their entrance, made the heart of Miriam sink within her, though it failed to impart a tremor to her manner, or to weaken her resolution.

As their eyes became more accustomed to

the gloom amid which they stood, the ruffians uttered a yell of demoniacal triumph on discovering that they were opposed only by two weak females; and one of them, an athletic and fierce-looking wretch who was a step or two in advance of his comrades, sprang towards the lamp, and holding it aloft, took a survey of the vault, which he completed by placing the light close to the countenance of the trembling menial:—

"Carrion, by St. Anthony!" he exclaimed with a hoarse laugh; "not even worth the burning. Pass her by, one and all of you, lest she bewitch you with some devilish sorcery in revenge of her own ugliness—But ha! what have we here?" he pursued, as he transferred his scrutiny to the daughter of Ben Abdel; who with her hand buried amid the folds of her girdle, stood unshrinkingly before them; "Nay, nay; a woman—only a woman, comrades"—he added hastily, as his companions rushed forward; "an accursed Jewess—and yet I have a fancy to take

her hence; she is my prize—yonder lies a dead man on a heap of goodly garments better worth the having, share them among you, and leave the Israelitish woman to me."

"Lend me the light, I must see her before I consent;" said a sullen ruffian who stood close beside him: "I have heard that some of their women are fair enough—lend me the light, I say; I have no distaste myself to a pair of bright eyes."

"Marry, thou art a fitting mate for bright eyes!" sneered the foremost; "better look about thee for some toy to take home to thy wife—surely thou needest not a second."

"And even if such were my pleasure;" growled the wretch, who still pressed forward; "think 'st thou that I would peril mine immortal soul by wedding a Jew?"

For the first time a faint groan burst from the lips of Miriam; the words of the miscreant had stricken her even to the heart.

"Nay, nay; we all know that Master Rufin

is too good a Catholic to do so;" said a voice from behind; "But what of all this? Have ye forgotten that time wears, and the sport must end at last, that thus ye stand cavilling for a petticoat? Have ye grown squeamish that ye make not short work at once, and pass on to another dwelling. Pshaw! a blow and a curse would end all, and ye would be men again."

"No blow falls here;" said the man who had first spoken, pointing to Miriam; "and curses cast at a Jew are worse than idle; but what of the laggard yonder, comrades? hath some good Christian sent him to his rest already, or is the work still to do?"

The other ruffians turned simultaneously towards the couch of Ben Abdel, and then for the first time, Miriam lifted up her voice.

"Not a step nearer—" she said, as she stretched forth her arm authoritatively towards them; "not a step nearer, lest the foot which approaches be withered as it meets the earth—on your lives, touch him not; lest the hand

which grasps him fall away from the arm to which it clings—There is no evil upon earth—no misery in hell, which I invoke not upon him who neglects my bidding. Take all that ye see around you—gold, and jewels, and sumptuous raiment; but upon no hair of his head shall ye lay hold, lest your own blench as ye commit the sacrilege."

As her voice died away among the echoes of the vault, which prolonged her last word to a duration almost supernatural from the energy with which she had pronounced it, not a voice answered—not a limb stirred; but soon a whisper grew among the intruders, and ere long the undaunted maiden heard herself denounced by the collected ruffians as a witch!

"Down with the sorceress!" shouted several voices; "she hath escaped the flame, but she cannot escape the servants of the Cross—smite her to the earth, and let her hellish arts perish with her!"

"Cowards and miscreants!" exclaimed the

Jewess, as she stood before them in the pride of her young beauty, a scornful smile upon her lip, and a wild light in her eye; "Are ye men? Are ye Christians? doth it beseem you either as the one or as the other to come in crowds to do battle with a woman? Look upon me—were mine hour come, one blow even from your weakest, were enough, but I tell ye that this will not be; even as David, unarmed and single-handed, routed the Philistines, and slew their giant-leader, so shall I laugh to scorn your unholy efforts!—We are bowed, but we are not bent—we are scattered, but we are not lost—we are smitten, but we are not slain.—Shame on ye! Can ye not leave to her sorrow a woman who will soon be desolate—a daughter who will soon be fatherless?—Are ye brothers and husbands? forget not how soon the brand may be at your own hearths, and your darlings among lions. Ye are tall men and strong;—but ere long your gourd may be withered, and your staff broken—Away then, ere the Judgment

overtake you—Away, ere I fall upon my bended knees, and call down on your devoted heads the malediction of the Mighty One of Israel!"

"Enough of this, my pretty mistress;" said the man who yet stood at her side; "we are not to be affrighted by a few hard words—you are my prize, and right glad should you be that a Christian cares enough for your bright eyes to save you from the daggers of his comrades. Come, come, this is idle!—" and as he spoke, he flung his arm about her, and strove to drag her from the vault.

"Unhand me, ruffian!" exclaimed the undaunted Jewess, "or thou shalt pay a heavier penalty for thy discourtsy than may be good for thy most sinful soul—thou art not fit to die—"

"Nor have I any fancy for the pastime;" laughed her captor; "I will yet live, my pretty Jewess, as thou shalt do likewise—am I not about to commit heresy for thy sake?"

"Unhand her, wretch! or earn my dying

curse!" cried Ben Abdel, who as his daughter struggled to free herself from the ruffian, obtained a more distinct perception of her danger than his dull ear had yet afforded; "Unhand her! or ——" the effort was too mighty for his waning strength—the pang too utter for his bruised and broken spirit; as he fell back, the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and after a slight struggle, Ben Abdel was at rest!

The eyes of Miriam fastened upon the countenance of her father as he sank again upon his pallet, and she struggled no longer; she forgot that the arm of a miscreant was folded about her—she forgot that she was surrounded by enemies—beset by violence and danger—desolate, and almost defenceless—she saw only her dying father—dying, without an arm to pillow his drooping head—without a draught of water to cool his parching lips—without a voice to whisper peace to his departing spirit; and she

stood with drooping head and clenched hands, the mute image of despair.

But such a mood could not be of long continuance amid such companions; and Miriam was awakened from her lethargy of sorrow by the rude pressure of a bearded lip upon her cheek, and in an instant she awoke again to a sense of all her peril and of all her helplessness.

"God of my Fathers!" she exclaimed as she sprang aside; "hide thy face from me for awhile, and make no record of my crime—free me from these human fiends, or give me strength to free myself, and pardon me the deed!" then flinging back her long hair, and erecting her tall figure to its fullest height, she thrust from her the ruffian who still held her fast, as she cried in a tone of anguish:—

"Is the death-chamber of the father a fitting scene for indignity to his daughter? Is his death-hour a fitting season? Spare me if ye are men—spare me, or let me die."

"Tush! tush!" laughed the wretch; "there are dead enough in the city—we have idled here too long; therefore, hold thy peace, for thou art a fair prize, and must abide thy lot."

In the next instant a shriek loud, and shrill, and thrilling, rang through the vault, and was succeeded by a burst of fiend-like laughter; but the horrid mirth endured not long, for even as it pealed out, the voice of the Jewess was heard, as she exclaimed:—"Thou hast provoked thy fate—*He* cursed thee as he died—and lo! the curse is come!"

A heavy fall succeeded; the dagger of the undaunted Miriam had entered the heart of her persecutor, and after springing high into the air, he had fallen back at her feet a corse.

It was a terrible moment; the Jewess stood alone, opposed to a band of ruffians whose comrade she had slain; no help was near—the hoary domestic whose presence should have imparted comfort had sunk beneath the terrors of the hour, and she was now cowered

down in a distant corner, gibbering and grinning—a drivelling idiot!

Miriam glanced but once towards her, and then withdrew her eyes from the appalling spectacle; her dagger was yet in her hand, and the life-blood of her enemy was dropping in large gouts from its crimsoned blade—the corse of her last parent lay beside her—the body of him whom she had slain cumbered her path—the faithful servant of her house was but as a painted sepulchre in which the light is extinguished—she was alone!

Suddenly a fierce cry pealed out—a cry for vengeance; and again a rude grasp was upon the arm of the maiden; then indeed, for one brief moment, nature would have way, and the despairing shriek of the ill-fated Jewess rang out, terrible in its intensity of anguish.

"Miriam! Miriam!" at this instant resounded from above; "Miriam! if thou yet livest, answer me—"

"Save me! save me!" shrieked the maiden

in reply, as she struggled in the grasp of her assailants; "Save me from worse than death!"

The appeal was answered:—ere another breath was drawn, an armed man sprang into the vault at a bound, followed by a score of Richard's soldiery—there was a rush, a yell of defiance —fierce oaths—yet fiercer blows—a shout of exultation—a momentary pause—and the deliverer of the Jewish Miriam was kneeling at her feet.

"I thank thee, Edgar De Clancy;" said the maiden with quivering lips; "It was an achievement worthy of a Christian Knight—the God of my people reward thee for thy mercy! —and now leave me—leave me to the companionship of the dead in body, and the dead in spirit—the murdered father, and the maniac-menial. De Clancy, in this hour the despised and forsaken Jewess glories in her faith, for these by which thou art surrounded were the deeds of Christians! I stand here beneath the ashes of my desolated home—beside the body of my slaughtered parent—near the

corse of him who would have withered up my youth, and whom I slew with my own hand—face to face with the man whose falsehood blighted me—I look around upon the victors and the victims; and again I tell thee that in this hour, Baron De Clancy, the daughter of Ben Abdel—the Jewish Miriam—glories in her faith!"

"I cannot leave thee here;" murmured De Clancy convulsively; "it were to abandon thee to destruction."

"And whither would'st thou lead me?" demanded the maiden; "my friends are murdered, or have fled—my people are scattered—my last parent is no more—my home hath passed from the face of the earth, and the foot of the stranger tramples its ruins—I am even as the Daughter of Jerusalem mourning the desolation of the bright and the beautiful—the overthrow of the high places—the desecration of the Sanctuary—leave me to my sorrow—I must bury my dead."

"Be that my task, Miriam;" said the young noble; "With the reverence of a son will I lay the head of Ben Abdel in the grave, for he who loved the daughter will respect the father's ashes; nor will Ben Abdel sleep the less peacefully that a Christian performed his obsequies—"

"I have no alternative!" murmured the Jewess, wringing her hands; "Even from him who hath done me foul wrong, must I submit to receive my mightiest benefit. Baron De Clancy, be it as thou hast said—Here, where he fell, let him rest—the God of Abraham will not forget him on the great day."

The young noble made a signal to his followers which they silently obeyed; and after having removed one of the flat stones with which the vault was paved, they speedily excavated a sufficient hollow to receive the body of Ben Abdel. Miriam meanwhile, with a firm hand, and a tearless eye, assisted De Clancy to envelop the corse of her father in one of the costly shawls

on which he had lain as he expired; but when her task was ended, the spirit which had endured so much gave way, and she flung herself on the body in an abandonment of grief so fearful that even the stoutest heart among the soldiery quailed at its violence. Then suddenly unwreathing her arms from about the dead, she tossed back her clinging and dishevelled hair, and burst into a lament whose wild eloquence thrilled to the spirit of her hearers, and held them spell-bound.

CHAPTER IX.

"The Steed hath run his race, and the goal is reached—Mourn, Daughters of Israel, for the strong man is laid low—

"The Eagle hath winged his flight to his abiding-place in the rock, and none can penetrate to his eirie—Weep, Daughters of Israel, for the mighty one is fallen—

"The Prophet of the Lord hath smitten the rock, and the living waters have gushed forth—Bewail yourselves, Daughters of Israel, for the high spirit hath departed from among you—

"Pleasant was his smile as the Sun on Sion, and refreshing were his words as the waves of Jordan—

"Lofty was his stature as the cedar of Lebanon, and beneath the shelter of his branches men rejoiced themselves, and were glad—

"Open was his hand as the light which shines on all unsparingly; and strong was his arm, for the might of the merciful never faileth—

"Even as the mother clingeth to her first-born, so clung he to the Faith of his Fathers; and as the Hart panteth for the rushing waters, so panted he for Thee, Oh! God of Abraham—

"The Taper hath lived its hour, and is extinguished—Mourn, Daughters of Israel, for the light which burnt brightly among the tribes is quenched—

"The stately tree hath spread wide its arms, and the storm-wind hath scattered its leaves—Weep, Daughters of Israel, for the mighty forest-monarch is laid low—

"Mount Ararat hath reared its crest to Heaven, and the sun hath set below its summit—Bewail yourselves, Daughters of Israel, for the star which lit up the horizon of your faith hath been quenched in night—

"Aye, weep and bewail yourselves, ye Daughters of Jerusalem; and be ye even as Rachel mourning for her children, to whom comfort came not, and for whom was no consolation—He is gone who hath cared for you—He hath departed who cherished you—Red is the burial-sheet of Ben Abdel; and his blood crieth at the judgment-seat for vengeance on the Christian!"

The wail ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, and Miriam stood for awhile bending down over the body! her sobs were convulsive, but she shed no tear; and terrified at an anguish so deep and fearful, De Clancy at length ventured to murmur her name.

"Who calls?" demanded the Jewess, awakening from her trance of grief; "Ha! Christian,

is it thee? Our task is not yet ended; let us complete it ere we go forth: thou, to thy place of pride, and the bereaved daughter of Ben Abdel to become the bond-woman of the Gentiles."

"Nay, not so, Miriam;" said the young Baron soothingly: "never shall want or sorrow come near thee while I have life."

"Hush, Edgar De Clancy;" whispered the Jewess with her finger on her lip; "Let not the dead hear thee rashly pledge thyself to a guardianship more than human—Of want I have no fear: the sorrow hath already overtaken me. It is easy to strew thorns upon the path of happiness, but is it difficult to pluck them forth.—Nay, do it not hastily;" she pursued, as the men-at-arms moved forward to raise the body; "remove him as ye would a slumbering child, and so may ye yourselves find honourable burial. None are here to bless him ere the earth is heaped upon his

breast, save one; but surely the blessing of a broken heart will avail hereafter!"

As Miriam sank upon her knees, De Clancy lifted the head of Ben Abdel from the earth, and assisted by his followers, laid him gently in his rude grave; then, pausing in the good work, he looked enquiringly towards the mourner.

"Even terminate thy task;" she said firmly in reply; "I have borne to part from him when he could hear me, look on me, and love me—the rest is easy."

A few moments sufficed to shut Ben Abdel for ever from the sight of man; and when the large stone was again replaced, Miriam rose from the earth, and gathering up her scattered hair, she rolled it closely about her head, and resumed her turban; then she folded herself in her ample mantle, and flung a thick veil over her face, ere she again turned towards De Clancy.

"Christian!" she said at length, in a tone so harsh and hollow that it was startling;

"thou hast this night done a good deed for which thy reward will not be wanting. Stop not short in the work of mercy: the people of Israel weep and lament them on every side—Go forth, thou wilt yet find many orphans mourning beside their dead—many weak women wailing over their strong men laid low—Go, and do unto them even as thou hast done to me."

"And thyself, Miriam?"

"Care not for me—my dead hast thou buried—my strong one hast thou laid at rest—for myself I reck little."

"And are we indeed to part thus, Miriam?" asked the young man in a tone of reproach.

"How would'st thou that we should part, Edgar De Clancy?" demanded the Jewess in reply: "What greeting should pass between the Israelitish woman and the Christian noble? As befits my helplessness and my desolation, I have received favours at thy hands beyond all requital, and I must bear the burthen to my grave—"

"There was a time when we parted not in this wise—" murmured De Clancy.

"How sayest thou?" exclaimed Miriam bitterly: "would'st thou utter the words of passion with thy foot upon my father's grave? would'st thou ask *me* to utter them? I, the forsaken, the scorned, the forgotten?—Would'st thou turn traitor to thy Christian mistress even as thou did'st to thy Jewish victim? Leave me, De Clancy, ere I forget the gratitude I owe thee."

"I dare not leave thee, Miriam. Shall I rescue thee from one peril only to expose thee to others from which thou may'st not escape? Listen to me:—thou art homeless and desolate—and sooner would Edgar De Clancy pour forth his life-blood in this vault, and perish beneath thine eyes, than leave one whom he hath loved—whom he still loves—beset by danger, and exposed to violence. Had I a mother, to her would I conduct thee; were not my sister afar off, for thee would I bespeak her tenderness—but, Miriam, there is yet one who loves

me more than parent or sister, and for my sake she will cherish thee."

"Speakest thou of Rachel Delawere?"

"Aye, even of her—though she may scorn the suitor, she will yet receive the suit—With her thou wilt be safe."

"And this poor maniac?" said Miriam, pointing towards the aged victim, who was yet couching in her hiding-place.

"On the honour of a true knight she shall be cared for."

"Lead on then, Baron De Clancy;" said the Jewess with stern haughtiness; "I follow thee."

When they emerged from the subterranean, day-light was just beginning to steal over the horizon; while the waning moon, as she slowly disappeared, caught the reflection of a burning pile behind which she was descending, and took a blood-red stain. Of the dwelling of Ben Abdel nothing now remained save a few tottering walls; of the street in which it had lately stood, ruin and desolation alone marked out the boun-

daries; while the distant shout of the infuriated populace, the crash of falling houses, and the crackling of flames, proclaimed that the work of murder and devastation still progressed in the distance.

Bowed as was the spirit of the Jewess, and exhausted as were her energies, by the exertions and sufferings of the past night, she yet declined the support which De Clancy would fain have afforded; while pressing closely to his side, and followed by his soldiery, she made her way among the smouldering masses which cumbered her path; the remains of what had once been the homes of her people. By a circuitous but safe path, her companion led her on in silence towards the mansion of Lord Pembroke, forgetful of the difficulties which he must in all probability encounter ere he obtained ingress for so extraordinary a guest. Miriam however, fully appreciated those difficulties; and when they had at length left the immediate neighbourhood of the rioters, she said calmly :—

"The distance which we have to travel cannot now be great, my lord De Clancy; were it not well that thou should'st walk forward alone, and seek an audience of the Lady Rachel? The danger of receiving one of the Jewish people will be tenfold increased after the events of this night, and the daughter of Ben Abdel would not draw down on others the evils which she hath herself experienced. If it be the good pleasure of the Lady Delawere to receive me among the number of her handmaidens, I shall be grateful for a protection which none can know better how to appreciate; should she refuse to me a place beneath her roof, I shall but share the fate of my people, and suffer for my faith."

"Thou art right, Miriam;" said De Clancy; "thy ready forethought shames my tardy wit. 'Tis with my lord of Pembroke that we must temporise; Rachel Delaware hath too high a heart to quail at danger when she can do a noble deed.—I mark thy glance, but even

although she may have cast forth mine image from her heart, still am I bound to do her justice in all truth and honesty—The evil which I have drawn down upon mine own head I must bear as I best may—I have been the sport of circumstances,—but I will not weary thee by comments on mine own ill fortunes; rest here awhile, Miriam, and I will not be tardy in my task."

Then summoning his followers to his side, De Clancy spoke long and earnestly to them, ere be intrusted the passive Jewess to their temporary guardianship; and turned hastily away.

His absence was a brief one, but his manner was hurried and constrained on his return; and Miriam was instantly conscious of the change. "I am a heavy charge, my Lord De Clancy;" she said calmly, "and I would fain free thee from the burthen; thou hast failed in thine attempt, and I pray thee let me thank thee, and depart."

"No, on my knighthood, Miriam, not so;"

replied the Baron; "but I have seen the Lady Rachel; and surely thou can'st believe that the meeting was no pleasurable one."

"And for my sake thou hast ventured thus hurriedly into her presence?"

"Miriam, I would do much, very much for thy sake—I would—"

"I pardon the reply, my Lord De Clancy:" said the Jewess coldly: "mine own ill-chosen sentence drew it forth; but we will say no more on so falsely-timed a subject—and this should be, I think, the home of the Lady Delawere."

It was indeed the mansion of the Lord Pembroke before which they stood as the Jewess spoke; and desiring his followers to withdraw to the other extremity of the street, De Clancy led his companion to a more retired entrance, where his low signal was instantly answered by the page of the Lady Rachel.

The boy bent his head reverentially as the daughter of Ben Abdel crossed the threshold,

and then closing the door softly, he led the way in silence to the apartments of his mistress.

The Lady Rachel, in common with most of her sex, had watched all through the past night of tumult and slaughter; and as the page threw back the heavy crimson curtain which fell over the door, Miriam discovered her on her knees, with the rosary which had been her own gift, depending from her hand. As the sound of their footsteps met her ear, the Lady Rachel rose from her position, and walked forward to receive her muffled guest.

"Welcome," she said; "daughter of sorrow and of tears—welcome to my heart and to my home—as a sister do I greet thee—as a sister will I cherish thee—thy name was on my lips as I saw thee enter, and my prayer hath been heard, for thou art here in safety."

As she spoke, she led the Jewess to a seat, and with her own hands would have removed her veil, but Miriam stept back a pace or two,

and having herself withdrawn it, she said slowly :—

"I have borne much, lady, very much ; but the slight blossom which hath braved the storm-wind will sometimes die of the very intensity of the sun-shine—I can bear misery, and terror, and anguish, but the kind tone and the soft glance I cannot bear to-night. I come not before thee as I once did ; then I was wretched, but I was innocent—now—" and she stretched forth her hand towards the light; "now there is blood upon my hand, and upon my heart—Lady of Delawere, ere I sit in thine home and eat of thy bread, I must tell thee all—the stain which no tears can wipe away is upon my spirit —I am a murderess."

"Can this be?" gasped the Lady Rachel, glancing for the first time towards De Clancy.

"It is:" said Miriam firmly : "need I tell thee *why* I did the deed? enough that it is done ; and now I pray thee hear me as I declare

that to the Lord De Clancy I, in turn, owe my life—*my* prayer is also heard—it was that beneath thy roof I might make this acknowledgment, and part from him for ever."

"In this trial at least thou shalt not strive alone;" said the Lady Rachel, but her lip quivered, and her voice shook as she spoke: "the Lord De Clancy hath, in this passage, done his devoir like a true knight, and hath redeemed his falsehood; for this exploit I owe him, through my regard for thee, a courtesy, which had he failed thee in thy need, I surely had denied—and thus, I also make him mine acknowledgment, and part from him for ever."

"Hear me at least—" commenced the young Baron.

"Leave, I pray thee, thy cause in my hands:" said the Jewess, with a sickly smile; "not for my sake shalt thou lose the bride of thy heart; in all that hath passed between thee and me, the world hath had its share: that

which thou did'st once feel for the daughter of Ben Abdel was but mere earthly passion, divested of some portion of its leaven by an over-indulged gratitude—it could not stand the test of scorn, the chances of danger, nor the overthrow of ambitious hopes — the affection which hath since grown in thy breast for one of the fair and beautiful of thine own faith, is a deeper, a more enduring love: it blights not thy pride, it withers not thy sympathies, it rather heightens the one and deepens the other —thus then, thy passion for the Jewish Miriam should not be visited in coldness on thee by thy Christian mistress—a short while since I deemed otherwise — when I was unconscious of any sorrow save that which thy falsehood had bequeathed to me, I denounced thy passion as worthless—a thing of words and sophistries—a form without a soul—but I have lived to believe otherwise—The deeds of the past night have awakened me to a more generous faith; when the thunders of Sinai burst above my head, thy

hand shielded me from the storm—when the waters of desolation deluged my soul, it was thou who did'st withdraw me from the flood; for this may thy days be many, and thy blessings multiplied; a cry is gone up for thee from the grave, and the heart of the fatherless hath echoed it!"

"Leave us, my Lord De Clancy;" said the Lady Rachel: "leave us until the edge of misery be somewhat dulled. The thanks of two who have loved thee, of two who have trusted thee, go with thee."

"May I not at least plead—"

"Not a syllable till we next meet; have pity now upon the weakness of the one, and the anguish of the other: words cannot heal the bleeding heart, nor raise up the stricken spirit."

De Clancy persisted no longer; but bending his head to the Lady Rachel, and glancing deprecatingly towards the Jewess, he turned and left the room, followed by the page.

As the door closed behind him, the Lady Rachel cast herself back in her chair, and buried her face in her spread hands; while Miriam flung herself at her feet, and murmured out:

"If thou indeed lovest him, lady, have pity alike upon him and upon thine own heart—thou can'st not guess the bitterness of a spirit cast back upon itself—glancing inward upon its own ruins—hopeless, desolate, wasted—Oh! be not as I am—scatter not dust upon thy young head, but go forth on thy way rejoicing: for lo! the storm cometh, and none know where it may fall. Pleasant, meanwhile, are the olive groves and the vineyards; rest thee beneath their green boughs while the summer endureth; braid thy hair, and walk forth in thy beauty, while youth lasteth, for when age overtaketh thee, thy hair will be gray, and thy step feeble, and thou wilt faint by the way—look not back upon the past, but forward into the future; for when the cloud hath gone by, pleasant is the sky of promise."

"If he be a true man, Miriam;" murmured the Lady Rachel; "thou wilt yet be his wife."

"Lady;" said the Jewess, raising her eyes calmly to her companion; "enough, that ere Ben Abdel expired, I vowed never again to love a Christian—I live to fulfil that vow!"

END OF VOL. II.

B. BENSLEY, PRINTER.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 055271529